

CHRISTMAS NUMBER



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DRAWN BY LUCIEN DAVIS, R.I.

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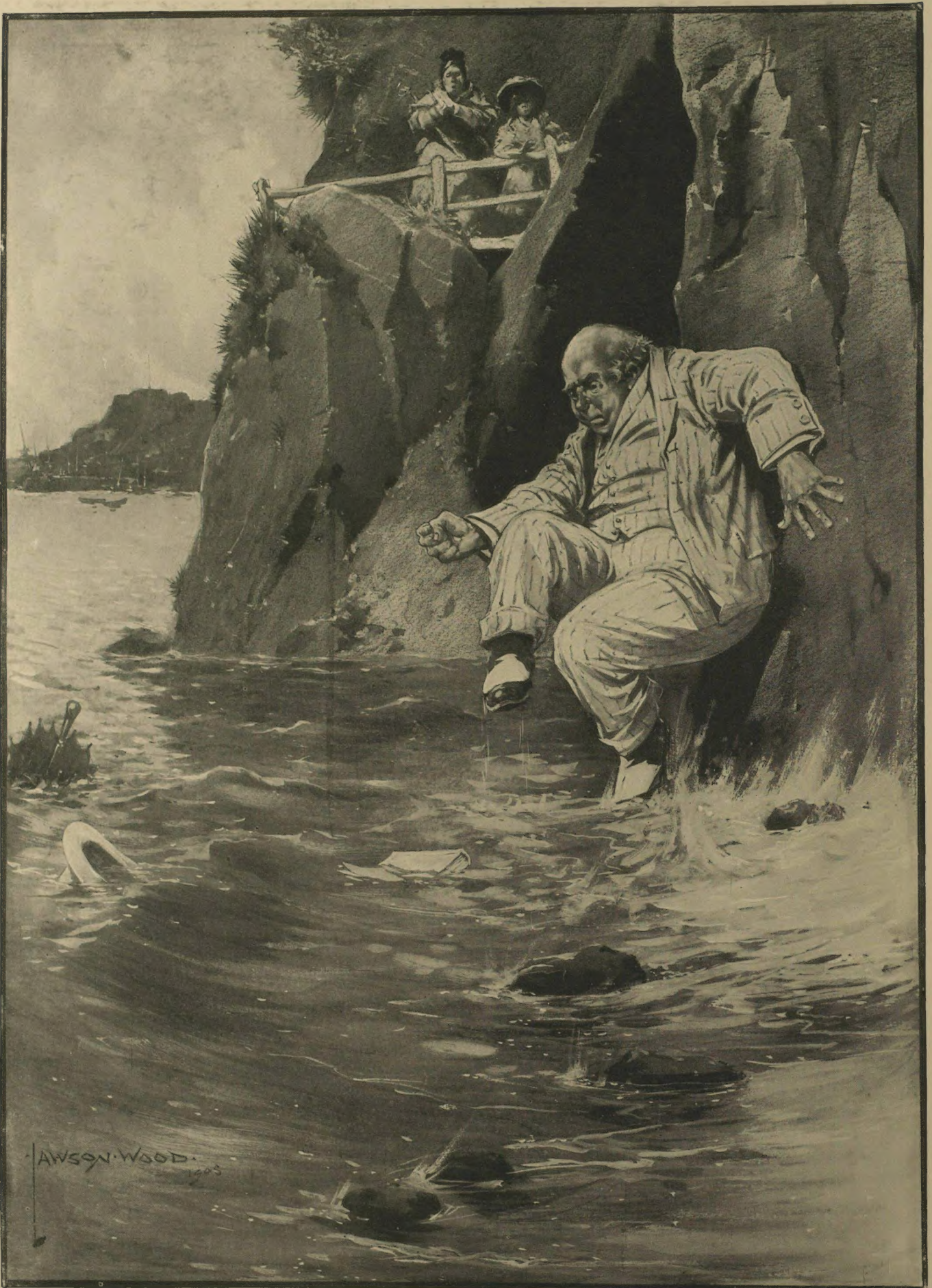
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I.—WILLIAM RUFUS (SO NAMED FROM HIS RED HAIR) SHOT IN THE NEW FOREST.

DRAWN BY LAWSON WOOD.

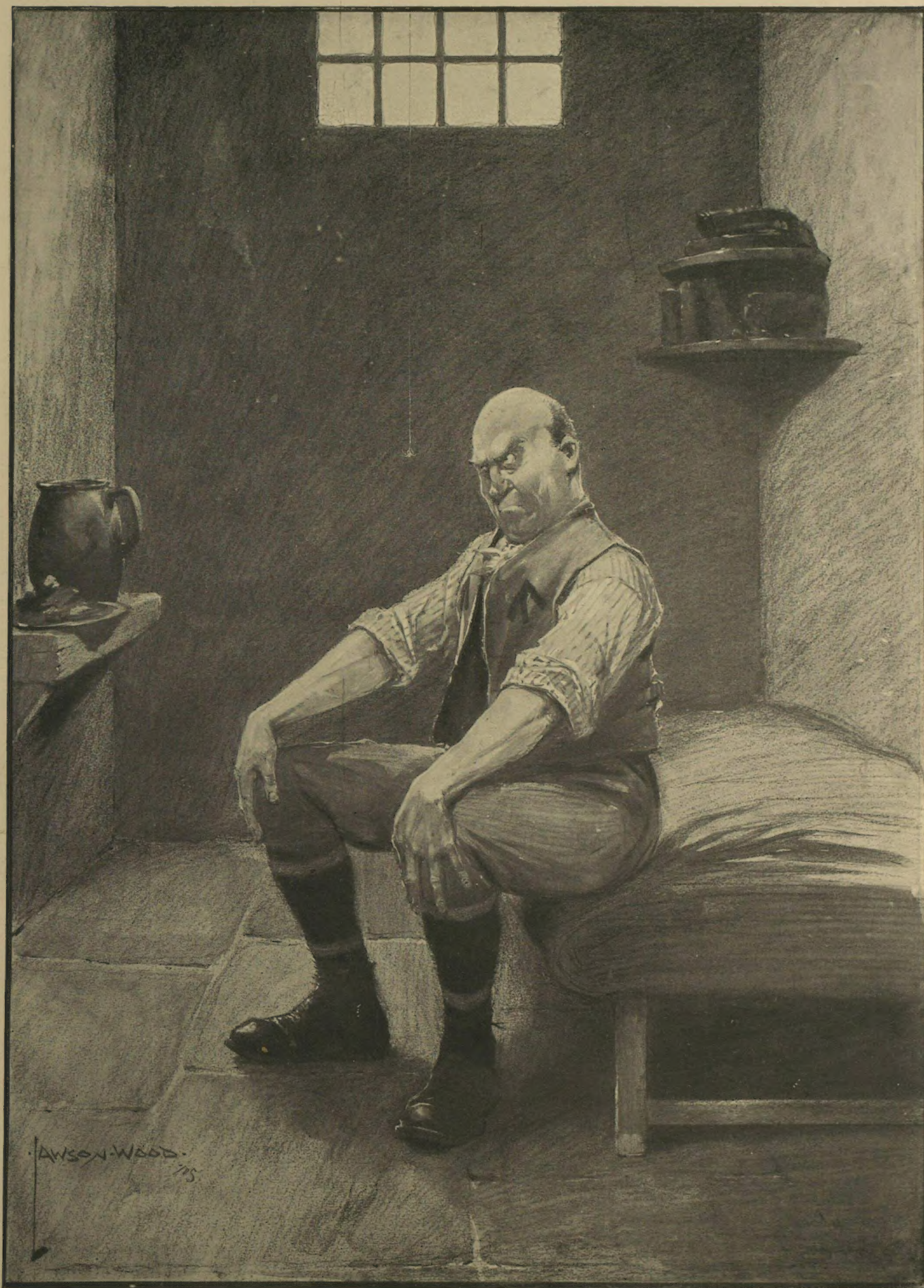
OUR UP-TO-DATE READINGS OF HISTORY FOR THE CHRISTMAS FIRESIDE.



II.—JOHN LOSING HIS EFFECTS IN THE WASH.

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III.—BRUCE AND THE SPIDER.

DRAWN BY LAWSON WOOD.

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IV.—THE LANDING OF THE PILGRIM FATHERS IN AMERICA.

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V.—CHARLES IN THE OAK.

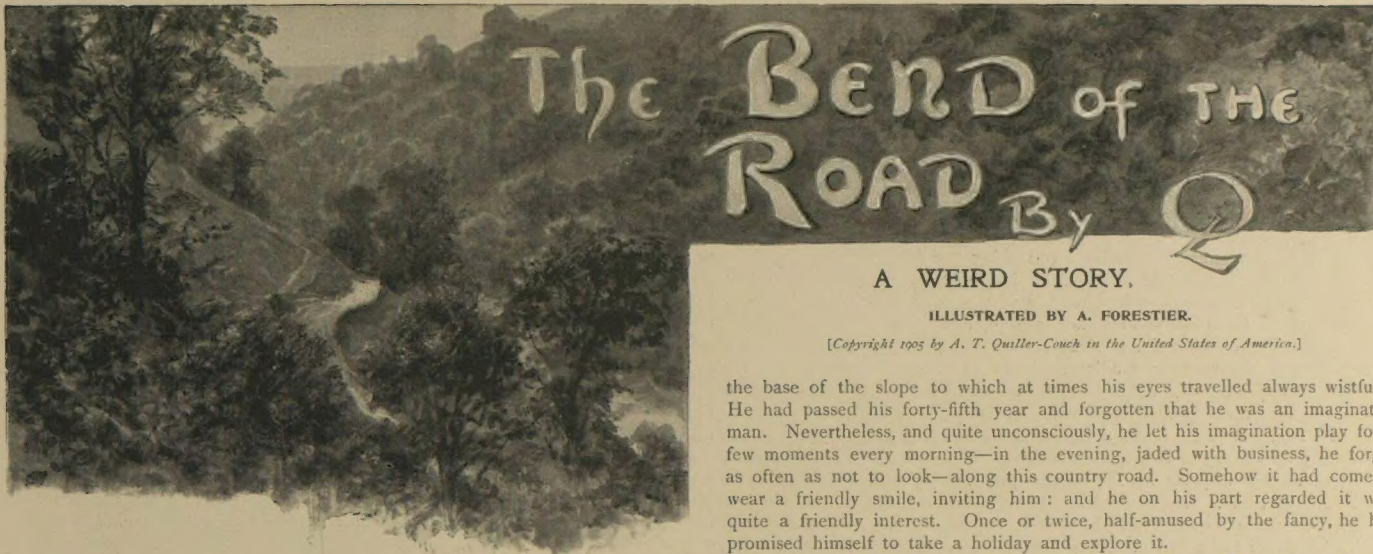
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OUR UP-TO-DATE READINGS OF HISTORY FOR THE CHRISTMAS FIRESIDE.



VI—OLIVER REFUSES THE CROWN.

DRAWN BY LAWSON WOOD.



The BEND of the ROAD By Q

A WEIRD STORY.

ILLUSTRATED BY A. FORESTIER.

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I.

JUST outside the small country station of M— in Cornwall, a viaduct carries the Great Western Railway line across a coombe, or narrow valley, through which a tributary trout-stream runs southward to meet the tides of the L— river. From the carriage-window as you pass you look down the coombe for half a mile perhaps, and also down a road which, leading out from M— station a few yards below the viaduct, descends the left-hand slope at a sharp incline to the stream; but whether to cross it or run close beside it down the valley bottom you cannot tell, since before they meet an eastward curve of the coombe shuts off the view.

Both slopes are pleasantly wooded, and tall beeches, interset here and there with pines—a pretty contrast in the spring—spread their boughs over the road, which is cut cornice-wise with a low parapet hedge to protect it along the outer side, where the ground falls steeply to the water-meadows, winding like a narrow green riband edged by the stream with twinkling silver.

For the rest, there appears nothing remarkable in the valley: and certainly Mr. Molesworth, who crossed and recrossed it regularly on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays on his way to and from his banking business in Plymouth, would have been puzzled to explain why, three times out of four, as his train rattled over the viaduct, he laid down his newspaper, took the cigar from his mouth, and gazed down from the window of his first-class smoking carriage upon the green water-meadows and the curving road. The Great Western line for thirty miles or so on the far side of Plymouth runs through scenery singularly beautiful, and its many viaducts carry it over at least a dozen coombes more strikingly picturesque than this particular one which alone engaged his curiosity. The secret, perhaps, lay with the road. Mr. Molesworth, who had never set foot on it, sometimes wondered whither it led and into what country it disappeared around

the base of the slope to which at times his eyes travelled always wistfully. He had passed his forty-fifth year and forgotten that he was an imaginative man. Nevertheless, and quite unconsciously, he let his imagination play for a few moments every morning—in the evening, jaded with business, he forgot as often as not to look—along this country road. Somehow it had come to wear a friendly smile, inviting him: and he on his part regarded it with quite a friendly interest. Once or twice, half-amused by the fancy, he had promised himself to take a holiday and explore it.

Years had gone by, and the promise remained unredeemed, nor appeared likely to be redeemed: yet at the back of his mind he was always aware of it; and when the train slowed down and stopped at M— Station he usually spared a second look for the folks on the platform. They had come by the road; and others, alighting, were about to take the road.

They were few enough, as a rule: apple-cheeked farmers and country-wives with their baskets, bound for Plymouth market; on summer mornings, as likely as not, an angler or two, thick-booted, carrying rod and creel, their hats wreathed with March-browns or palmers on silvery lines of gut; in the autumn, now and then a sportsman with his gun; on Monday mornings, half-a-dozen Navy lads, returning from furlough, with stains of native earth on their shoes and the edges of their wide trousers. . . . The faces of all these people wore an innocent friendliness: to Mr. Molesworth, a childless man, they seemed a childlike race and mysterious as children, carrying with them like an aura the preoccupations of the valley from which they emerged. He decided that the country below the road must be worth exploring, that spring or early summer must be the proper season, and angling his pretext. He had been an accomplished fly-fisher in his youth, and wondered how much of the art would return to his hand when, after many years, it balanced the rod again.

Together with his fly-fishing, Mr. Molesworth had forgotten most of the propensities of his youth. He had been born an only son of rich



He glanced up at the further bank and into a pair of brown eyes.

parents, who shrank from exposing him to the rigours and temptations of a public school. Consequently, when the time came for him to go up to Oxford, he found no friends there and made few, being sensitive, shy, entirely unskilled in games, and but moderately interested in learning. His vacations, which he spent at home, were as dull as he had always found them under a succession of

well-meaning, middle-aged tutors—until, one August day, as he played a twelve-pound salmon, he glanced up at the further bank and into a pair of brown eyes which were watching him with unconcealed interest.

The eyes belonged to a yeoman-farmer's daughter: and young Molesworth lost his fish, but returned next day, and again day after day, to try for him. At the end of three weeks or so, his parents—he was a poor hand at dissimulation—discovered what was happening, and interfered with promptness and resolution. He had not learnt the art of disobedience, and while he considered how to begin (having, indeed, taken his passion with a thoroughness that did him credit), Miss Margaret, sorely weeping, was packed off on a visit to her mother's relations near Exeter, where, three months later, she married a young farmer-cousin and emigrated to Canada.

In this way Mr. Molesworth's love-making and his fly-fishing had come to an end together. Like Gibbon, he had sighed as a lover, and (Miss Margaret's faithlessness assisting) obeyed as a son. Nevertheless, the sequel did not quite fulfil his parents' hopes, who, having acted with decision in a situation which took them unawares, were willing enough to make amends by providing him with quite a large choice of suitable partners. To their dismay, it appeared that he had done with all thoughts of matrimony: and I am not sure that, as the years went on, their dismay did not deepen into regret. To the end he made them an admirable son, but they went down to their graves and left him unmarried.

In all other respects he followed irreproachably the line of life they had marked out for him. He succeeded to the directorate of the Bank in which the family had made its money, and to those unpaid offices of local distinction which his father had adorned. As a banker he was eminently "sound"—that is to say, cautious, but not obstinately conservative; as a justice of the peace, scrupulous, fair, inclined to mercy, exact in the performance of all his duties. As High Sheriff he filled his term of office and discharged it adequately, but without ostentation. Respecting wealth, but not greatly caring for it—as why should he?—every year without effort he put aside a thousand or two. Men liked him, in spite of his shyness: his good manners hiding a certain fastidiousness of which he was aware without being at all proud of it. No one had ever treated him with familiarity: one or two at the most called him friend, and these probably enjoyed a deeper friendship than they knew: everyone felt him to be, behind his reserve, a good fellow.

Regularly thrice a week he drove down in his phaeton to the small country station at the foot of his park, and caught the 10.27 up-train: regularly as the train started he lit the cigar which, carefully smoked, was regularly three-parts consumed by the time he crossed the M— viaduct; and regularly, as he lit it, he was conscious of a faint feeling of resentment at the presence of Sir John Crang.

Nine mornings out of ten, Sir John Crang (who lived two stations down the line) would be his fellow-traveller, and three times out of five his only companion. Sir John was an ex-Civil Servant, knighted for what were known vaguely as "services in Burmah," and, now retired upon a derelict country seat in Cornwall, was making a bold push for local importance, and dividing his leisure between the cultivation of roses (in which he excelled) and the directorship of a large soap-factory near the Plymouth docks. Mr. Molesworth did not like him, and might have accounted for his dislike by a variety of reasons. He himself, for example, grew roses in a small way as an amateur, and had been used to achieve successes at the local flower-shows until Sir John arrived and in one season beat him out of the field. This, as an essentially generous man, he might have forgiven; but not the loud dogmatic air of patronage with which, on venturing to congratulate his rival and discuss some question of culture, he had been bullied and set right and generally treated as an ignorant junior. Moreover, he seemed to observe—but he may have been mistaken—that, whatever rose he selected for his buttonhole, Sir John would take note of it and trump it next day with a finer bloom.

But these were trifles. Putting them aside, Mr. Molesworth felt that he could never like the man who—to be short—was less of a gentleman than a highly coloured and somewhat aggressive imitation of one. Most of all, perhaps, he abhorred Sir John's bulging glassy eyeballs, of a hard white by contrast with his coppery skin—surest sign of the cold sensualist. But in fact he took no pains to analyse his aversion, which extended even to the smell of Sir John's excellent but Burmese cigars. The two men nodded when they met, and usually exchanged a remark or two on the weather. Beyond this they rarely conversed, even upon politics, although both were Conservatives and voters in the same electoral division.

The day of which this story tells was a Saturday in the month of May 188—, a warm and cloudless morning, which seemed to mark the real beginning of summer after an unusually cold spring. The year, indeed, had reached that exact point when for a week or so the young leaves are as fragrant as flowers, and the rush of the train swept a thousand delicious scents in at the open windows. Mr. Molesworth had donned a white waistcoat in honour of the weather, and wore a bud of a Capucine rose in his buttonhole. Sir John had adorned himself with an enormous glowing *Sénateur Vaisse*. (Why not a Paul Neyron while he was about it? wondered Mr. Molesworth, as he surveyed the globular bloom.)

Now in the breast a door flings wide—

It may have been the weather that disposed Sir John to talk to-day. After commending it and adding a word or two in general in praise of the West-country climate, he paused and watched Mr. Molesworth lighting his cigar.

"You're a man of regular habits?" he observed unexpectedly, with a shade of interrogation in his voice.

Mr. Molesworth frowned and tossed his match out of window.

"I believe in regular habits myself." Sir John, bent on affability, laid down his newspaper on his knee. "There's one danger about them,

though: they're deadening. They save a man the bother of thinking, and persuade him he's doing right, when all the reason is that he's done the same thing a hundred times before. I came across that in a book once, and it seemed to me dashed sound sense. Now here's something I'd like to ask you—have you any theory at all about dreams?"

"Dreams?" echoed Mr. Molesworth, taken aback by the inconsequent question.

"There's a Society—isn't there?—that makes a study of 'em and collects evidence. Man wakes up, having dreamt that friend whom he knows to be abroad is standing by his bed; lights his candle or turns on the electric-light and looks at his watch; goes to sleep again, tells his family all about it at breakfast, and a week or two later learns that his friend died at such-and-such an hour and the very minute his watch pointed to. That's the sort of thing."

"You mean the Psychological Society?"

"That's the name. Well, I'm a case for it. Anyway, I can knock the inside out of one of the theories, that dreams are a sort of memory-game made up of scenes and scraps and suchlike out of your waking consciousness—isn't that the lingo? Now, I've never had but one dream in my life; but I've dreamt it two or three score of times, and I dreamt it last night."

"Indeed?"—Mr. Molesworth was getting mildly interested.

"And I'm not what you'd call a fanciful sort of person," went on Sir John, with obvious veracity. "Regular habits—rise early and to bed early; never a day's trouble with my digestion; off to sleep as soon as my head touches the pillow. You can't call it a nightmare, and yet it's unpleasant, somehow."

"But what is it?"

"Well"—Sir John seemed to hesitate—"you might call it a scene. Yes, that's it—a scene. There's a piece of water and a church beside it—just an ordinary-looking little parish church, with a tower but no pinnacles. Outside the porch there's a tallish stone cross—you can just see it between the elms from the churchyard gate; and going through the gate you step over a sort of gridiron—half-a-dozen granite stones laid parallel, with spaces between."

"Then it must be a Cornish church. You never see that contrivance outside the Duchy: though it's worth copying. It keeps out sheep and cattle, while even a child can step across it easily."

"But, my dear Sir, I never saw Cornwall—and certainly never saw or heard of this contrivance—until I came and settled here, eight years ago: whereas I've been dreaming this, off and on, ever since I was fifteen."

"And you never saw the rest of the scene? the church itself, for instance?"

"Neither stick nor stone of it: I'll take my oath. Mind you, it isn't like a church made up of different scraps of memory. It's just that particular church, and I know it by heart, down to a scaffold-hole partly hidden with grass close under the lowest string-course of the tower, facing the gate."

"And inside?"

"I don't know. I've never been inside. But stop a moment—you haven't heard the half of it yet. There's a road comes downhill to the shore, between the churchyard wall—there's a heap of greyish silvery-looking stuff, by the way, growing on the coping—something like lavender, with yellow blossoms—where was I? Oh yes, and on the other side of the road there's a tall hedge with elms above it. It breaks off where the road takes a bend around and in front of the churchyard gate, with a yard or two of turf on the side towards the water and from the turf a clean drop of three feet, or a little less, on to the foreshore. The foreshore is all grey stones, round and flat, the sort you'd choose to play what's called ducks-and-drakes. It goes curving along, and the road with it, until the beach ends with a spit of rock, and over the rock a kind of cottage (only bigger, but thatched and whitewashed just like a cottage) with a garden, and in the garden a laburnum in flower, leaning slantwise"—Sir John raised his open hand and bent his forefinger to indicate the angle—"and behind the cottage a reddish cliff with a few clumps of furze overhanging it, and the turf on it stretching up to a larch plantation. . . ."

Sir John paused and rubbed his forehead meditatively.

"At least," he resumed, "I *think* it's a larch plantation; but the scene gets confused above a certain height. It's the foreshore, and the church and the cottage that I always see clearest. Yes, and I forgot to tell you—I'm a poor hand at description—that there's a splash of whitewash on the spit of rock, and an iron ring fixed there, for warping-in a vessel, maybe: and sometimes there's a boat, out on the water. . . ."

"You describe it vividly enough," said Mr. Molesworth as Sir John paused and, apparently on the point of resuming his story, checked himself, tossed his cigar out of the window, and chose a fresh one from his pocket-case. "Well, and what happens in your dream?"

Sir John struck a match, puffed his fresh cigar alight, deliberately examined the ignited end, and flung the match away. "Nothing happens, I told you it was just a scene, didn't I?"

"You said that somehow the dream was an unpleasant one."

"So I did. So it is. It makes me damnably uncomfortable every time I dream it, though for the life of me I can't tell you why."

"The picture as you draw it seems to me quite a pleasant one."

"So it is, again."

"And you say nothing happens?"

"Well"—Sir John took the cigar from his mouth and looked at it—"nothing ever happens in it, definitely: nothing at all. But always in the dream there's a smell of lemon verbena—it comes from the garden—and a curious hissing noise—and a sense of a black man's being somehow mixed up in it all. . . ."



"If it hadn't been for Moung Gway I should have been a dead man."

"THE BEND OF THE ROAD."—BY "Q."

"A black man?"

"Black or brown . . . in the dream I don't think I've ever actually seen him. The hissing sound—it's like the hiss of a snake, only ten times louder—may have come into the dream of late years. As to that I won't swear. But I'm dead certain there was always a black man mixed up in it, or what I may call a sense of one: and that, as you will say, is the most curious part of the whole business."

Sir John flipped away the ash of his cigar and leant forward impressively.

"If I wasn't, as I say, dead sure of his having been in it from the first," he went on, "I could tell you the exact date when he took a hand in the game: because," he resumed after another pause, "I once actually saw what I'm telling you."

"But you told me," objected Mr. Molesworth, "that you had never actually seen it."

"I was wrong then. I saw it once, in a Burmese boy's hand at Maulmain. The old Eastern trick, you know: palmful of ink and the rest of it. There was nothing particular about the boy except an ugly scar on his cheek (caused, I believe, by his mother having put him down to sleep in the fireplace while the clay floor of it was nearly red-hot under the ashes). His master called himself his grandfather—a holy-looking man with a white beard down to his loins: and the pair of them used to come up every year from Mergui or some such part, at the Full Moon of Taboung, which happens at the end of March and is the big feast in Maulmain. The pair of them stood close by the great entrance of the Shway Dagone, where the three roads meet, and just below the long flights of steps leading up to the pagoda. The second day of the feast I was making for the entrance with a couple of naval officers I had picked up at the Club, and my man, Mounng Gway, following as close as he could keep in the crowd. Just as we were going up the steps, the old impostor challenged me, and, partly to show my friends what the game was like—for they were new to the country—I stopped and found a coin for him. He poured the usual dollop of ink into the boy's hand, and, by George, Sir, next minute I was staring at the very thing I'd seen a score of times in my dreams but never out of them. I tell you, there's more in that Eastern hanky-panky than meets the eye; beyond that I'll offer no opinion. Outside the magic I believe the whole business was a put-up job, to catch my attention and take me unawares. For when I stepped back, pretty well startled and blinking from the strain of keeping my attention fixed on the boy's palm, a man jumped forward from the crowd and precious nearly knifed me. If it hadn't been for Mounng Gway, who tripped him up and knocked him sideways, I should have been a dead man in two twos—for my friends were taken aback by the suddenness of it. But in less than a minute we had him down and the handcuffs on him; and the end was, he got five years' hard, which means hefting chain-shot from one end to another of the prison square and then hefting it back again. There was a rather neat little Burmese girl, you see—a sort of niece of Mounng Gway's—who had taken a fancy to me; and this turned out to be a disappointed lover, just turned up from a voyage to Cagayan in a paddy-boat. I believed he had fixed it up with the venerable one to hold me with his magic until he got in his stroke. Venomous beggars, those Burmans, if you cross 'em in the wrong way. The fellow got his release a week before I left Maulmain for good, and the very next day Mounng Gway was found, down by the quays, dead as a haddock, with a wound between the shoulder-blades as neat as if he'd been measured for it. Oh, I could tell you a story or two about those fellows!"

"It's easily explained, at any rate," Mr. Molesworth suggested, "why you see a dark-skinned man in your dream."

"But I tell you, my dear Sir, he has been a part of the dream from the beginning . . . before I went to Wren's, and long before ever I thought of Burmah. He's as old as the church itself, and the foreshore and the cottage—the whole scene, in fact—though I can't say he's half as distinct. I can't tell you in the least, for instance, what his features are like. I've said that the upper part of the dream is vague to me; at the end of the foreshore, that is, where the cottage stands; the church tower I can see plainly enough to the very top. But over by the cottage—above the porch, as you may say—everything seems to swim in a mist: and it's up in that mist the fellow's head and shoulders appear and vanish. Sometimes I think he's looking out of the window at me and draws back into

the room as if he didn't want to be seen; and the mist itself gathers and floats away with the hissing sound I told you about. . . ."

Sir John's voice paused abruptly. The train was drawing near the M— viaduct, and Mr. Molesworth from force of habit had turned his eyes to the window, to gaze down the green valley. He withdrew them suddenly, and looked around at his companion.

"Ah, to be sure," he said vaguely; "I had forgotten the hissing sound."

It was curious, but as he spoke he himself became aware of a loud hissing sound filling his ears. The train lurched and jolted heavily.

"Hullo!" exclaimed Sir John, half rising in his seat, "something's wrong." He was staring past Mr. Molesworth and out of the window.

"Nasty place for an accident, too," he added in a slow, strained voice.

The two men looked at each other for a moment. Sir John's face wore a tense expression—a kind of galvanised smile. Mr. Molesworth closed his eyes, instinctively concealing his sudden sickening terror of what an accident just there must mean: and for a second or so he actually had a sensation of dropping into space. He remembered having felt something like it in dreams three or four times in his life: and at the same instant he remembered a country superstition gravely imparted to him in childhood by his old nurse, that if you dreamt of falling and didn't wake up before reaching the bottom, you would surely die. The absurdity of it chased away his terror, and he opened his eyes and looked about him with a short laugh.

The train still jolted heavily, but had begun to slow down, and Mr. Molesworth drew a long breath as a glance told him that they were past the viaduct. Sir John had risen, and was leaning out of the farther window. Something had gone amiss, then. But what?

He put the question aloud. Sir John, his head and shoulders well outside the carriage-window, did not answer; probably he did not hear.

As the train ran into M— station and came to a standstill, Mr. Molesworth caught a glimpse of the station-master, in his gold-braided cap, by the door of the booking-office. He wore a grave, almost a scared look. The three or four country-people on the sunny platform seemed to have their gaze drawn by the engine, and somebody ahead there was shouting. Sir John Crang, without a backward look, flung the door open and stepped out. Mr. Molesworth was preparing to follow—and by the cramped feeling in his fingers was aware at the same instant that he had been gripping the arm-rest almost desperately—when the guard of the train came running by and paused to thrust his head in at the open doorway to explain.

"Engine's broken her coupling-rod, Sir—just before we came to the viaduct. Mercy for us she didn't leave the rails."

"Mercy indeed, as you say," Mr. Molesworth assented. "I suppose we shall be hung up here until they send a relief down?"

The guard—Mr. Molesworth knew him as "George" by name and by habit constantly polite—turned and waved his flag hurriedly, in acknowledgment of the shouting ahead, before answering—

"You may count on half-an-hour's delay, Sir. Lucky it's no worse. You'll excuse me—they're calling for me down yonder."

He ran on, and Mr. Molesworth, following, stepped out upon the platform, of which this end was already deserted, all the passengers having alighted and hurried forward to inspect the broken-down engine. A few paces beyond the door, he met the station-master racing back to dispatch a telegram.

"It seems that we've had a narrow escape," said Mr. Molesworth.

The station-master touched his hat and plunged into his office. Mr. Molesworth, instead of joining the crowd around the engine, halted before a small pile of luggage on a bench outside the waiting-room and absent-mindedly scanned the labels.

Among the parcels lay a fishing-rod in a canvas case and a wicker creel, the pair of them labelled and bearing the name of an acquaintance of his—a certain Sir Warwick Moyle, baronet and county magistrate, beside whom he habitually sat at Quarter Sessions.

"I had no idea," Mr. Molesworth mused, "that Moyle was an angler. It would be a fair joke, anyway, to borrow his rod and fill up the time.—How long before the relief comes down?" he asked, intercepting the station-master as he came rushing out from his office and slammed the door behind him.

"Maybe an hour, Sir, before we get you started again. I can't honestly promise you less than forty minutes."



Mr. Molesworth stepped out beyond the station gateway upon the road.

"Very well, then: I'm going to borrow Sir Warwick's rod, there, and fill up the time," said Mr. Molesworth, pointing at it.

The station-master apparently did not hear; at any rate he passed on without remonstrance. Mr. Molesworth slung the creel over his shoulder, picked up the rod, and stepped out beyond the station gateway upon the road.

II.

THE road ran through a cutting, sunless, cooled by many small springs of water trickling down the rock-face, green with draperies of the hart's tongue and common polypody ferns; and emerged again into warmth upon a curve of the hillside facing southward down the coombe and almost close under the second span of the viaduct, where the tall trestles plunged down among the tree-tops like gigantic stilts, and the railway left earth and spun itself across the chasm like a line of gossamer, its criss-crossed timbers so delicately pencilled against the blue that the whole structure seemed to swing there in the morning breeze. Above it, in heights yet more giddy, the larks were chiming; and Mr. Molesworth's heart went up to those clear heights with a sudden lift.

In all the many times he had crossed the viaduct he had never once guessed—he could not have imagined—how beautiful it looked from below. He stood and gazed and drew a long breath. Was it the escape from dreadful peril, with its blessed revulsion of feeling, that so quickened all his senses dulled by years of habit? He could not tell. He gave himself up to the strange and innocent excitement.

Why had he never till now—and now only by accident—obeyed the impulse to descend this road and explore? He was rich: he had not even the excuse of children to be provided for; the Bank might surely have waited for one day. He did not want much money. His tastes were simple—was not the happiness at this moment thrilling him a proof that his tastes were simple as a child's? Lo, too, his eyes were looking on the world as freshly as a child's! Why had he so long denied them a holiday? Why do men chain themselves in prisons of their own making?

What had the station-master said? It might be an hour—certainly not less than forty minutes—before the train could be restarted. Mr. Molesworth looked at his watch. Forty minutes to explore the road: forty minutes' holiday! He laughed, pocketed the watch again, and took the road briskly, humming a song.

Suppose he missed his train? Why, then, the Bank must do without him to-day, as it would have to do without him, one of these days, when he was dead. He thought of his fellow-directors' faces, and laughed again. He felt morally certain of missing that train. What kind of world would it be if money grew in birds' nests, or if leaves were currency and withered in autumn? Would it include truant-schools for bankers?

He that is down needs fear no fall,
He that is low, no pride;
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide.
Fulness to such a burden is
That go on pilgrimage—

Mr. Molesworth did not actually sing these words. The tune he hummed was a wordless one, and, for that matter, not even much of a

broke off, and a plantation of green young larches climbed the hill, the wild hyacinths ran down to the stream in sheet upon sheet of blue.

Mr. Molesworth rested his creel on the low hedge above one of these sheets of blue, and with the music of the stream in his ears began to unpack Sir Warwick Moyle's fishing-rod. For a moment he paused, bethinking himself, with another short laugh, that, without flies, neither rod nor line would catch him a fish. But decidedly fortune was kind to him to-day: for, opening the creel, he found Sir Warwick's fly-book within it, bulging with hooks and flies by the score—nay, by the hundred. He unbuckled the strap and was turning the leaves to make his choice, when his ear caught the sound of footsteps, and he lifted his eyes to see Sir John Crang coming down the road.

"Hullo!" hailed Sir John. "I saw you slip out of the station and took a fancy that I'd follow. Pretty little out-of-the-way spot, this. Eh? Why, where on earth did you pick up those angling traps?"

"I stole them," answered Mr. Molesworth deliberately, choosing a fly. He did not in the least desire Sir John's company, but somehow found himself too full of good-nature to resent it actively.

"Stole 'em?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, they belong to a friend of mine. They were lying ready to hand in the station and I borrowed them without leave. He won't mind."

"You're a cool one, I must say." It may be that the recent agitation of his feelings had shaken Sir John's native vulgarity to the surface. Certainly he spoke now with a commonness of idiom and accent he was usually at pains to conceal. "You must have a fair nerve altogether, for all you're such a quiet-looking chap. Hadn't even the curiosity—had you?—to find out what had gone wrong; but just picked up a handy fishing-rod and strolled

off to fill up the time till damages were repaired. Look here. Do you know, or don't you, that 'twasn't by more than a hair's breadth we missed going over that viaduct?"

"I knew we must have had a narrow escape."

"And you can be tying the fly there on to that gut as steady as a doctor picking up an artery! Well, I envy you. Look at that!" Sir John held out a brown, hairy, shaking hand. "And I don't reckon myself a coward, either."

Mr. Molesworth knew that the man's record had established at any rate his reputation for courage. He had, in fact, been a famous hunter-out of Dacoity.

"I didn't know you went in for that sort of thing," pursued Sir John, watching Mr. Molesworth, who, with a pen-knife, was trimming the ends of gut. "Don't mind my watching your first cast or two, I hope? I won't talk. Anglers don't like being interrupted, I know."

"I shall be glad of your company: and please talk as much as you choose. To tell the truth, I haven't handled a rod for years, and I'm making this little experiment to see if I've quite lost the knack rather than with any hope of catching fish."

It appeared, however, that he had not lost the knack, and after the first cast or two, in the pleasure of recovered skill, his senses abandoned themselves entirely to the sport. Sir John had lit a cigar and seated himself amid the bracken a short distance back from the brink, to watch: but whether he conversed or not Mr. Molesworth could not tell. He remembered afterwards



He lifted his eyes to see Sir John Crang coming down the road.



Here before him was a shore, with a church beside it, and at the far end a whitewashed cottage.

tune. But he afterwards declared very positively that he sang the sense of them, being challenged by the birds, calling in contention louder and louder as the road dipped towards the stream, and by the music of lapsing water which now began to possess his ear. For some five or six furlongs the road descended under beech-boughs, between slopes carpeted with last year's leaves: but by-and-by the beeches gave place to an oak coppice with a matted undergrowth of the whortleberry; and where these in turn

that at the end of twenty minutes or so—probably when his cigar was finished—Sir John rose and announced his intention of strolling some way farther down the valley—"to soothe his nerves a bit," as he said, adding, "So long! I see you're going to miss that train, to a certainty."

Yes, it was certain enough that Mr. Molesworth would miss his train. He fished down the stream slowly, the song and dazzle of the water filling his ears, his vision, his whole being soothed and lulled less by the actual

scene than by a hundred memories it awakened or set stirring. He was young again—a youth of twenty with romance in his heart. The plants and grasses he trod were the asphodels, sundew, water-mint his feet had crushed—crushed into fragrance—five-and-twenty years ago . . .

So deeply preoccupied was he that, coming to a bend where the coombe suddenly widened and the stream, without warning, cast its green fringe of alders like a slough and slipped down a beach of flat pebbles to the head waters of a tidal creek, Mr. Molesworth rubbed his eyes with a start. Had the stream been a Naiad she could not have given him the slip more coquettishly.

He rubbed his eyes, and then with a short gasp of wonder—almost of terror—involuntarily looked around for Sir John. Here before him was a shore, with a church beside it, and at the far end a whitewashed cottage—surely the very shore, church, cottage of Sir John's dream! Yes, there was the stone cross before the porch; and here the grid-fashioned church stile; and yonder under the string-course the scaffold-hole with the grass growing out of it!

If Mr. Molesworth's hands had been steady when he tied on his May-fly, they trembled enough now as he hurriedly put up his tackle and disjointed his rod: and still, and again while he hastened across to the cottage above the rocky spit—the cottage with the larch plantation above and in the garden a laburnum aslant and in bloom—his eyes sought the beach for Sir John.

The cottage was a large one, as Sir John had described. It was, in fact, a waterside inn, with its name, *The Saracen's Head*, painted in black letters along its white-washed front and under a swinging signboard. Looking up at the board Mr. Molesworth discerned, beneath its dark varnish, the shoulders, scimitar, and grinning face of a turbaned Saracen, and laughed aloud between incredulity and a sense of terror absurdly relieved. This, then, was Sir John's black man!

But almost at the same moment another face looked over the low hedge—the face of a young girl in a blue sun-bonnet: and Mr. Molesworth put out a hand to the gate to steady himself.

The girl—she had heard his laugh, perhaps—gazed down at him with a frank curiosity. Her eyes were honest, clear, untroubled: they were also extremely beautiful eyes: and they were more. As Mr. Molesworth to his last day was prepared to take oath, here were the very eyes, as here was the very face and here the very form, of the Margaret whom he had suffered for, and suffered to be lost to him, twenty-five years ago. It was Margaret, and she had not aged one day.

In Margaret's voice, too, seeing that he made no motion to enter, she spoke down to him across the hedge.

"Are you a friend, Sir, of the gentleman that was here just now?"

"Sir John Crang?" Mr. Molesworth just managed to command his voice.

"I don't know his name, Sir. But he left his cigar-case behind. I found it on the settle five minutes after he had gone, and ran out to search for him. . . ."

Mr. Molesworth opened the gate and held out a hand for the case. Yes: he recognised it. It bore Sir John's monogram in silver.

"I will give it to him," he said. Without exactly knowing why, he followed her into the inn-kitchen. Yes, he would take a pint of her ale. "The home-brewed?" Yes, certainly, the home-brewed.

She brought it in a pewter tankard, exquisitely polished. The polish of it caught and cast back the sunlight in prismatic circles on the scoured deal table. The girl—Margaret—stood for a moment in the fuller sunlight by the window, lingering there to pick a dead leaf from a geranium on the ledge.

"Which way did Sir John go?"

"I *thought* he took the turning along the shore; but I didn't notice particularly which way he went. He said he had come down the valley, and I took it for granted he would be going on."

Mr. Molesworth drank his beer and stood up. "There are only two ways, then, out of this valley."

"Thank you, Sir—" As he paid her she dropped a small curtsy—"yes, only two ways—up the valley or along the shore. The road up the valley leads to the railway station."

"By the way, there was an accident at the station this morning?"

"Indeed, Sir?" Her beautiful eyes grew round. "Nothing serious, I hope?"

"It might have been a very nasty one indeed," said Mr. Molesworth, and paused. "I think I'll take a look along the shore before returning. I don't want to miss my friend, if I can help it."

"You can see right along it from the rock beyond the garden," said the girl, and Mr. Molesworth went out.

As he reached the spit of rock, the sunlight playing down the waters of the creek dazzled him for a moment. Rubbing his eyes, he saw, about two hundred yards along the foreshore, a boat grounded, and two figures beside it on the beach: and either his sight was playing him a trick or these two were struggling together.

He ran towards them. Almost as he started, in one of the figures he recognised Sir John. The other had him by the shoulders, and seemed to be dragging him by main force towards the boat. Mr. Molesworth shouted as he rushed up to the fray. The assailant turned—turned with a loud hissing sound—and, releasing Sir John, swung up a hand with something in it that flashed in the sun as he struck at the new-comer: and as Mr. Molesworth fell, he saw a fierce brown face and a cage of white, gleaming teeth bared in a savage grin. . . .

He picked himself up, the blood running warm over his eyes, and, as he stood erect for a moment, down over his white waistcoat. But the dusky face of his antagonist, had vanished and, with it, the whole scene.

In place of the foreshore with its flat grey stones, his eye travelled down a steep green slope. The hissing sound continued in his ears, louder than ever, but it came with violent jets of steam from a locomotive, grotesquely overturned some twenty yards below him. Fainting, he saw and sank across the body of Sir John Crang, which lay with face upturned among the June grasses, staring at the sky.

III.

*Statement by W. Pitt Ferguson, M.D.,
of Lockyer Street, Plymouth.*

THE foregoing narrative has been submitted to me by the writer, who was well acquainted with the late Mr. Molesworth. In my opinion it conveys a correct impression of that gentleman's temperament and character: and I can testify that in the details of his psychical adventures on the valley road leading to St. A——'s Church it adheres strictly to the account given me by Mr. Molesworth himself shortly after the accident on the M—— viaduct, and repeated by him several times with insistence during the illness which terminated mortally some four months later. The manner in which the narrative is presented may be open to criticism: but of this, as one who has for some years eschewed the reading of fiction, I am not a fair judge. It adds, at any rate, nothing in the way of "sensation" to the story as Mr. Molesworth told it: and of its improbability I should be the last to complain, who am to add, of my own positive observation,

some evidence which will make it appear yet more startling, if not wholly incredible.

The accident was actually witnessed by two men, cattle-jobbers, who were driving down the valley road in a light cart or "trap," and were within two hundred yards of the viaduct when they saw the train crash through the parapet over the second span (counting from the west), and strike and plunge down the slope. In their evidence at the inquest, and again at the Board of Trade inquiry, these men agree that it took them from five to eight minutes only to alight, run down and across the valley (fording the stream on their way), and scramble up to the scene of the disaster: and they further agree that one of the first sad objects on which their eyes fell was the dead body of Sir John Crang with Mr. Molesworth, alive but sadly injured and bleeding, stretched across it. Apparently they had managed to crawl from the wreck of the carriage before Sir John succumbed, or Mr. Molesworth had managed to drag his companion out—whether dead or alive cannot be told—before himself fainting from loss of blood.

The toll of the disaster, as is generally known, amounted to twelve killed and seventeen more or less seriously injured. Help having been summoned from M—— station, the injured—or as many of them as could be removed—were conveyed in an ambulance-train to Plymouth. Among them was Mr. Molesworth, whose apparent injuries were a broken hip, a laceration of the thigh, and an ugly, jagged scalp-wound. Of all these he made, in time, a fair recovery: but what brought him under my care was the nervous shock from which his



She spoke down to him across the hedge.



Apparently Mr. Molesworth had managed to drag his companion out.

"THE END OF THE ROAD."—BY "Q."

brain, even while his body healed, never made any promising attempt to rally. For some time after the surgeon had pronounced him cured he lingered on, a visibly dying man, and died in the end of utter nervous collapse.

Yet even within a few days of the end, his brain kept an astonishing clearness: and to me as well as to the friends who visited him in hospital and afterwards in his Plymouth lodgings—for he never returned home again, being unable to face another railway journey—he would maintain, and with astonishing vigour and lucidity of description, that he had actually in very truth travelled down the valley in company with Sir John Crang and seen with his own eyes everything related in the foregoing paper. Now as a record of what did undeniably pass through the brain of a cultivated man in some catastrophic moments, I found these recollections of his exceedingly interesting. As no evidence is harder to collect, so almost none can be of higher importance, than that of man's sensations at the exact moment when he passes, naturally or violently, out of this present life into whatever may be. Partly because Mr. Molesworth's story, which he persisted in, had this scientific value; partly in the hope of diverting his mind from the lethargy into which I perceived it to be sinking; I once begged him to write the whole story down. To

between the impossibility of accepting his story and the impossibility of doubting the assurance of so entirely honourable a man that he had never travelled the road in his life. At first I tried to believe that his recollections of it—detailed as they were—might one by one have been suggested by the view from the viaduct. But, honestly, I was soon obliged to give this up: and when we arrived at the creek's head and the small churchyard beside it, I confessed myself confounded. Point by point, and at every point, the actual scene reproduced Mr. Molesworth's description.

I prefer to make no comment on my last discovery. After the funeral, being curious to satisfy myself in every particular, I walked across the track to the inn—the Saracen's Head—which again answered Mr. Molesworth's description to the last detail. The house was kept by a widow and her daughter: and the girl—an extremely good-looking young person—made me welcome. I concluded she must be the original of Mr. Molesworth's illusion—perhaps the strangest of all his illusions—and took occasion to ask her (I confess not without a touch of trepidation) if she remembered the day of the accident. She answered that she remembered it well. I asked if she remembered any visitor, or visitors, coming to the inn on that day. She answered, None:—but that now I



She ran at once and fetched them.

this, however, he was unequal. His will betrayed him as soon as he took pen and paper.

The entire veracity of his recollection he none the less affirmed again and again, and with something like passion, although aware that his friends were but humouring him while they listened and made pretence to believe. The strong card—if I may so term it—in his evidence was undoubtedly Sir John Crang's cigar-case. It was found in Mr. Molesworth's breast-pocket when they undressed him at the hospital, and how it came there I confess I cannot explain. It may be that it had dropped on the grass from Sir John's pocket, and that Mr. Molesworth, under the hallucination which undoubtedly possessed him, picked it up, and pocketed it before the two cattle-drovers found him. It is an unlikely hypothesis, but I cannot suggest a likelier.

A fortnight before his death he sent for a lawyer and made his will, the sanity of which no one can challenge. At the end he directed that his body should be interred in the parish churchyard of St. A—, "as close as may be to the cross by the church porch." As a last challenge to scepticism this surely was defiant enough.

It was my duty to attend the funeral. The coffin, conveyed by train to M— Station, was there transferred to a hearse, and the procession followed the valley road. I forget at what point it began to be impressed upon me, who had never travelled the road before, that Mr. Molesworth's "recollections" of it had been so exact that they compelled a choice

happened to speak of it, somebody must have come that day while she was absent on an errand to the Vicarage (which lies some way along the shore to the westward): for on returning she found a fishing-rod and creel on the settle of the inn-kitchen.

The creel had a luggage-label tied to it, and on the label was written "Sir W. Moyle." She had written to Sir Warwick about it more than a month ago, but had not heard from him in answer. [It turned out that Sir Warwick had left England, three days after the accident, on a yachting excursion to Norway.]

"And a cigar-case?" I asked. "You don't remember seeing a cigar-case?"

She shook her head, evidently puzzled. "I know nothing about a cigar-case," she said. "But you shall see the rod and fishing-basket."

She ran at once and fetched them. Now that rod and that creel (and the fly-book within it) have since been restored to Sir Warwick Moyle. He had left them in care of the station-master at M—, whence they had been missing since the day of the accident. It was suspected that they had been stolen, in the confusion that day prevailing at the little station, by some ganger on the relief-train.

The girl, I am convinced, was honest, and had no notion how they found their way to the kitchen of the Saracen's Head: nor—to be equally honest—have I.



THE VEHMGERICHT REVERSED: WHOSE ARE THE EYES?

DRAWN BY LUCIEN DAVIS, R.I.

Two players unknown to the audience are shrouded in newspapers, only their eyes being left visible through holes. The players then guess by candle-light to whom the eyes belong. The shrouded figures dimly resemble the veiled judges of the Vehmgericht, or secret tribunal of Westphalia.



HE, SHE AND IT.

A Weird Story of Life After Death.

By CHARLES MARRIOTT. Illustrated by G. C. WILMSHURST.

THE death of Raymond Sylvester, of Prague, on January 15, 1897, was merely recorded in the English lay newspapers. There was a tiny paragraph in the more important medical journals to the effect that Immanuel Von Reichardt, Professor of Surgery in the

University of Vienna, had attended Sylvester's last moments, and himself performed an autopsy, removing the brain, according to Sylvester's dying request, "as a legacy to my wife." Editorial comment was confined to an expression of profound regret, and a short review of Sylvester's remarkable theories on the mechanism of consciousness. Of himself nothing was known beyond the mere fact that he was an Englishman by birth, who, after taking degrees of the Cambridge and London Universities, disappeared from this country. He had, apparently, neither practised nor held any public or professorial appointment in England.

In the month of April—that is to say, three months after Sylvester's death—Orme, editor of the *Psychological Review*, received a paper on a question then hot in the air, and purporting to have been written by Raymond Sylvester. From internal evidence it was impossible that it could have been composed during Sylvester's lifetime. The handwriting of the note accompanying the typed manuscript betrayed nothing, being, as in previous instances, that of a woman, presumably his wife. Orme wrote to the lady for an explanation; he received a civil reply, stating, "The communication is the work of Raymond Sylvester." This was, on the face of it, absurd, and Orme, a man of the highest discretion, hesitated to make use of an article of such doubtful authenticity. There were several possible solutions of the enigma.

(a) The paper had been drafted by Sylvester, with almost prophetic foresight, and afterwards adapted to the occasion by his widow, or some unknown assistant—possibly Von Reichardt.

(b) In spite of Von Reichardt's testimony, Sylvester was yet alive.

(c) Von Reichardt was Sylvester.

Orme inclined to c. He therefore approached Von Reichardt in a guarded letter, suggesting his collaboration, at least, in the paper on "Dual Personality." Von Reichardt, a man of aristocratic birth and haughty temper, resented the implication in terms that prevented further correspondence. In short, no solution was arrived at, and Orme, unwilling to neglect a paper of such value, made use of it, satisfying his professional scruples by printing the name of its author in inverted commas, "Raymond Sylvester."

At this time the chief English opponent of Sylvester's theories was Dr. James Monroe. His reply to the posthumous paper on Dual Personality came as a surprise to his colleagues, who had regarded him as a man of dignified, if somewhat ponderous character. On this occasion he betrayed a virulence of temper quite uncalled for by the subject under consideration, and evidently aroused by personal hostility to the dead man, whom he denounced as a charlatan and a mountebank. He allowed it to be understood that he had private reasons for his opinion, based upon an acquaintance with Sylvester before he left England. Monroe's polemic was generally accepted as final proof that the paper on Dual Personality was a discreditable compilation by some surviving disciple of Sylvester. Circumstances pointed to Von Reichardt; and when he himself died it was assumed that there would be no more Sylvester papers.

A few persons of imaginative turn were not satisfied with this arbitrary dismissal of the subject. Amongst them, Fergus Halloran, who was at this time Assistant Pathologist to the London County Council. Halloran was about thirty years of age, tall, and vividly handsome. His clean-cut features and virile movements gave the impression of great nervous energy: one felt that the outer man was moulded on a mind of singularly fine quality. In appearance, he suggested the poet rather than the man of science. Perhaps, by reason of his Celtic origin, he was a combination of the exact thinker and the dreamer; a type somewhat unusual in his profession, though it is, indeed, a question if the most important scientific discoveries are not, in their conception, intuitive rather than deductive. Halloran had already attracted some attention by his efforts towards the apparently hopeless task of localising the brain area concerned with purely intellectual processes. By some of the older men, Monroe in particular, he was looked upon as fanciful and unsound; though others, more perceptive, pointed out that, whatever might be said of Halloran's ideas, his methods

were unusually painstaking, and, since the meagre evidence from time to time collected seemed in support of his theories, he deserved at least serious consideration.

Less by temperament than of purpose Fergus Halloran was extremely methodical in the division of his days, and ascetic in his personal habits. He lived in quiet rooms in the older part of Hampstead. His laboratory duties took up the whole of his day; he dined at six and, every day, whatever the season, he took an hour's walking beforehand that his lonely meal might be salted with what human reflections he brought in from the street. For, unlike too many of his particular calling, he learned his psychology at first hand and from the average man and woman. One evening in the June following the death of Raymond Sylvester, Halloran was returning to his rooms by way of Railton Avenue when he met a woman whose face at once attracted him as a student. She looked about twenty-three, but matured as by some heavy responsibility. Halloran reflected on the comparative rareness of a serious expression: most people, most women especially, when unaware of notice, frown, simmer, or gape. This girl looked straight ahead with a curious preoccupation of manner; such a look as one sees in the eyes of soldiers home from active service. Halloran carried



With a sudden flame in her cheeks, turned impulsively and walked on.

home an image of peculiar dignity. On a second meeting, three days later, he was disappointed by observing the girl hesitate as if she invited recognition. Halloran coloured with vexation and passed quickly. Like most men of ardent nature he required a fastidious standard of conduct in women, and any want of reserve afflicted him as a personal humiliation. There only needed one more encounter to convince Halloran that he had been unjust, and to change his critical notice into a serious interest. As they drew together the woman swerved and looked full in his face. She was on the point of speaking, but, with a sudden flame in her cheeks, turned impulsively and walked on. When it was too late to overtake her, Halloran found a key to her behaviour; her eyes, less under control than her tongue, were those of one asking assistance. He did not see the girl again for some days, and was ready to confess to an increasing anxiety, when one evening, as he sat after dinner, his landlady announced a visitor.

"It's the foreign lady, Sir, who lives alone in Raleigh Place," said the good woman, proud of her detailed information. Halloran went

downstairs, to find the object of his speculations. Her candid "Oh, you are Dr. Halloran?" did not contain any romantic promise, but when she added, "I am Mrs. Raymond Sylvester," Halloran opened his eyes. He placed a chair for his visitor, who, however, remained standing; she apparently found some difficulty in explaining her presence. To help her out with it, Halloran began, "Can I be of service to you?"

"Yes," she answered, as one repeating a lesson; "I shall be glad if you will come at once to my husband."

Halloran did not betray any surprise; indeed, there was that in the girl's clear eyes which implored discretion. He looked at his note-book, unnecessarily, except to imply that there was nothing unusual in her request, and said, "I will come with you now." Mrs. Sylvester gave a gasp of relief, and seated herself with an obvious failure of strength now that she had secured Halloran's assistance. She was on her feet immediately, mutely pleading him to make haste and spare her further words. Halloran called a cab, and they drove in silence to Raleigh Place.

The house named by Mrs. Sylvester withdrew from the road with an air of discretion. As he followed the lady through a small, tidy, though uncultivated garden, Halloran was afflicted by the inhospitable appearance of the house-front, not due to the actual structure, which belonged to an older period, when geniality was a builder's virtue. The house was of red brick, with an iron balcony outside the three first-floor windows, which were

permitting a maximum of light and air. The brilliant bareness of the apartment was uncanny and remote from human associations as the temple of some cheerless faith; this effect, indeed, was increased by the disposition of the heavy table and chairs, conducting the attention to an altar-like structure at the farther end of the room. Upon this pedestal stood apparently a gramophone. As they approached, Halloran observed several important modifications. The machine, though more compact, had not the weird economy of the usual pattern. There was less visible metal, but the finely-made cabinet work of the casing suggested an egg-shaped visceral cavity, measuring about a foot the longest way. With his hasty examination, it occurred to Halloran that as the ordinary gramophone put one in mind of a gigantic insect poised for flight, so this suggested a reptile newly fed. Externally, in addition to the large trumpet-like mouthpiece, there was on either side a cup-shaped receiver fantastically suggestive of an ear. The whole apparatus was supported by a cylindrical pedestal, having a cupboard door on the right-hand side. At a little distance were two standard candelabra of wrought iron, set as for an altar. As he stood before the machine, Halloran's eyes were caught and held by the cold scrutiny of a pair of lenses.

The Thing spoke.

"You are Dr. Fergus Halloran; I'm pleased to make your acquaintance. I am Raymond Sylvester."

Halloran kept his head. There was nothing impossible, he reflected, in



"Can I be of service to you?"

furnished with green-painted louvre shutters, now folded back against the wall. Though small, the place suggested an institution rather than a home; occupied, but inhuman; and not until Halloran stood upon the doorstep did he realise that the cause was a vacancy in the windows from the absence of curtains. When Mrs. Sylvester pulled the bell-handle, there was no answering sound within the house. This was explained when the door was opened by an old woman with the spiritless countenance of a deaf mute, whose German features also made clear the landlady's misconception of Mrs. Sylvester's nationality. Inside the door Mrs. Sylvester turned with a confiding gesture.

"I will ask you," she said, "not to show surprise or resentment at anything you may see or hear, but to treat my husband as if he were an ordinary patient."

Halloran bowed; he was about to explain that he was not a practising physician, but thought better of it and remained silent. Mrs. Sylvester led him upstairs and into a large room, uncarpeted, but covered with a neutral-toned linoleum upon which their footsteps were unheard. The walls, painted a chilly grey, were naked of pictures and searched in every corner by the unhindered light from the two windows opening on the balcony. The air, in spite of the season, was cold and dry, and Halloran felt his nostrils tingling with a keen antiseptic odour. What little furniture the room contained was unupholstered and finished off with rounded edges; there were no ornaments, and everything seemed arranged to deaden sound, while

the record having been prepared. The uncertain breathing of the woman at his elbow helped him to be calm.

"I assure you," continued the machine, "that nothing but absolute necessity drove me to consult you. Before going any further, will you kindly examine my mechanism, and I shall endeavour to explain what I want you to do. But I see you are under the natural impression that I am a practical joke. The shortest way out of that is to ask me a question—anything you like."

The Thing spoke in a thin, blaring voice, without modulation. Looking upon the apparatus, bathed in merciless light, Halloran was reminded of the stories of Memnonian sands, from which sounds are said to be evoked by the impact of the sun's rays. The absence of mystery in the surroundings of the room tried his nerves so that he was almost unwilling to dispel the idea of artifice.

"Name the bones of the *carpus*," said Halloran at random. The Thing repeated them correctly.

"I think you will admit the gramophone idea may be dismissed; though perhaps you are considering the possibility of Sylvester being concealed in another room, and this but an ingenious extension of his organs? No doubt you will take my wife's word. Irene, will you give Dr. Halloran the benefit of your opinion?"

"This," said Mrs. Sylvester, with an almost imperceptible shiver, "is Raymond Sylvester."

"It is a useful disguise," tittered the instrument, "but I do not wish to conceal myself from you: as I said, I want your assistance. Irene will guide you in a preliminary examination before we discuss the question of treatment."

The egg-shaped central casket opened in two halves, the lower containing a covered glass vessel, filled with a colourless solution in which trembled a human brain. A network of fine insulated wires connected the brain with what may be termed the external organs of the instrument. The brain was moored to the bottom of the vessel by a thicker wire disappearing into the pedestal. Another wire of the same diameter ascended to a small circular zinc plate resting upon the upper posterior surface of the brain. Mrs. Sylvester opened the door in the pedestal, exposing a battery of two cells. When she removed the elliptical glass plate sealing the vessel, Halloran was aware of a faint odour of chlorine.

"You observe that, essentially, I consist of a battery and a brain," said Sylvester; "the rest is mere mechanism." Halloran was so absorbed in his minute examination that the sudden voice caused him to start involuntarily.

"I see," said Sylvester drily, "that, in spite of your training, you are not yet rid of the common illusion about the so-called mystery of life. If you will consider the human body with an open mind, you will agree with me that it consists of a variety of inconvenient organs engaged ultimately in the production of energy, and of a more subtle apparatus converting that energy into thought and volition. I won't bore you now with a history of the experiments by which I arrived at the conclusion, obvious to any unprejudiced observer, that the clumsy appliances of nature, subject as they are to disease and decay, wasting the greater part of their efforts on their own support, can be replaced by any simple contrivance for the direct production of energy. To go a step further—life is energy in flower. You are, of course, acquainted with the general principles of electricity?"

Halloran assented.

"Then I need only remind you that interruption of the electric current gives rise to phenomena varying with the nature of the substance interpolated. With a filament of platinum wire you get incandescence; with a mass of grey matter, cerebration. It is entirely a question of molecular structure; the resisting matter translates into its own language, so to speak, the invariable energy supplied by the battery."

"But—" began Halloran.

"I see you are full of objections; with your permission, we will not consider them just now. It is sufficient that I am." It gave a short, cackling laugh. "Is it not miraculous that nobody stumbled on this before? The experiment—so admirably described by Poe—of electrifying a corpse has often been tried, and I am convinced that in most cases consciousness has been recalled; but owing to the clumsy method of application, and to the fact that the motor centres respond more readily to external stimulation, the subject has only been able to find expression in convulsions terrifying to the investigator. But to return to myself. For some weeks I have been conscious of a gradual diminution of mental energy. At first this did not cause me any alarm, but a chance remark of Irene's aroused suspicion which resulted in the discovery that I am being slowly poisoned. The fluid in which you find me is a solution of certain chlorides, carbonates, and phosphates, together with a sterilised organic substance. These are, of course, gradually decomposed by electrolysis, and the elements necessary to nutrition—the amount is much smaller than you would suppose, by the way—taken up by osmosis; but, according to my equation, there should be no free chlorine. I calculated on recombination. On testing the fluid with a hydrometer, Irene discovered that the specific gravity, instead of being increased—as one might suppose by evaporation—is actually several degrees lower than when the solution was first made up. Will you therefore undertake a series of experiments to correct these errors? Incidentally, I may observe, my discovery throws considerable light on the function of the chlorides in the blood of the living organism. There is also, by the way, a slight exudation of cholesterine in the sulci, which must either be prevented or periodically removed."

Halloran was conscious that, with his examination, curiosity receded and gave place to a feeling of disgust. It came to him that the important question was the tie between the apparatus and the silent woman by his side. She was the more vital by contrast with this questionable survival; and its existence was a wrong against her humanity. Halloran found himself engaged in an abstract argument. The Thing was absolutely in his power; supposing he destroyed it, would the act be murder? Raymond Sylvester was legally dead; there was Von Reichardt's written word for that. But then his consciousness survived: therefore Raymond Sylvester physiologically lived.

"You hesitate, I see," said Sylvester with a wheezy chuckle. "Let me tell you that I don't press you to undertake this—duty, shall I say? There are many good reasons why you should decline to interfere. Had Von Reichardt lived you would have been spared the privilege. I don't know whether you are above vanity, but, I may observe, I chose you out of the whole profession. We read the journals even in Vienna; and we recognise the open mind."

Halloran remained silent.

"The man is insatiable!" cried Sylvester. "Finally, then, I directed Irene to take a house here on purpose that she might be near you."

"I will undertake the experiment," said Halloran, shortly, coming out of his reverie. Sylvester laughed disagreeably.

"I congratulate you," he sneered, "upon your susceptible nature. For myself I am incapable of any emotional disturbance. You have heard of Pure Reason? That is the condition I have achieved. Formerly, as no doubt you have heard—with picturesque exaggeration—I was a man of strong passions. They don't trouble me now. Irene—will you give Halloran some tea?"

Halloran found conversation difficult. The sense of being watched oppressed him, and he was abrupt and awkward. The Thing simmered with humorous malice.

"You remember, Halloran, the gentleman in 'Wilhelm Meister' who carried his diminutive wife about in a box? For me the case is reversed, with harder conditions, for am I not in the hands of the most vindictive of creatures—a woman? How easy to neglect my battery; how innocently a wire corrodes and breaks—breaks of itself! And the happy widow bundles the remains out on the dust-heap, a broken toy."

Whatever, at this time, was the emotional attitude of Irene Sylvester towards Pergus Halloran, it is certain that she shared his embarrassment. Sylvester took no pains to conceal his entire apprehension of the situation. In a vague monologue, he deplored his helplessness, praising the virtue of a woman bound for life by no possible tie but that of abstract duty to a mere Thinking Machine. Here was, he alleged, the supreme effort of Platonism. He suggested her trials, her temptations, the possible birth of a new love, the intolerable yearning of a balked maternal instinct. In a word, he spared no thrust of calculated irony to torture his helpless victims.

"I am afraid, Halloran," he said, "you will not be flattered when I tell you the difficulty I found in persuading Irene to make your acquaintance. Really," he drawled, "I fail to understand her reluctance. You are—it you will pardon my frankness—by no means unattractive. But there's no understanding these women, is there? Perhaps, you know, it was only her artfulness; she wished to make sure of my being past help before she called you in. Her excuses afforded me infinite amusement. At last I flatly ordered her to bring you here. One would have supposed, would they not, that my need was ample excuse for ignoring these flimsy proprieties? Ah, well—no doubt she had her own very good reasons for delay."

This companionship of the pillory had the inevitable effect of deepening Halloran's feeling towards Irene. If he suffered, how much more did she! and was it not clearly his duty to stand by her? He had an example in her fearless quiet, her unflinching gravity; only a momentary come and go of colour, an uncontrollable quiver of nostril, betraying her tension. Besides, he argued, on purely scientific grounds his or some other man's assistance was indispensable; and, considering the situation, Halloran was a little inclined to congratulate everybody that the choice had not fallen upon a person of lower principles. That Sylvester expected his co-operation was evident.

"You shall be my Consciousness-physician," he said; "the terms?—well, no doubt, you will make your own terms with Irene. I shall not—indeed, I cannot—interfere should she err on the side of generosity. If you ever find me *de trop*, you have only to turn off my switches—Irene will show you the details—and I am a mere cipher; blind, deaf, a lump of inarticulate grey matter. And now, I think, we will excuse you. Irene, there are still a few points upon which Dr. Halloran requires illumination, notably the circumstances of my previous history; and I trust you will not allow your absurd scruples to stand in the way of a plain statement of facts. I have warmed both hands, Halloran, both hands."

On leaving the house, Halloran was annoyed by the spectacle of Monroe walking placidly towards him. There was no mistaking that bulky figure. Monroe affected a Quaker-like honesty, a sheer black and white in his dress. His large, pale face was fringed with a silvery whisker; a broad black bow set off so much of shirt-front as the stiff broadcloth of his waistcoat allowed. In spite of his own bigness, his clothes always looked a little too large for him, so that his manner of learned benevolence was marred by a memory of the butler. Yet only the quick eyes in a smiling, immovable face, the lifting of the figure on the toes at every footstep, warned a shrewd observer that Monroe's advertised honesty was a convenient formula. This evening he was apparently unaware of Halloran's approach until they actually met. He greeted him with a well-executed movement of suave surprise.

"Ah, my dear Halloran!" he cried effusively, "lightening, or, should I say sweetening, the arduous hours? That's right, that's right! Don't shut yourself up too closely. I frequently deplore my neglect of recreative pastimes in my younger days."

Halloran had the uneasy feeling that Monroe had passed and repassed the house while he was inside. He had not forgotten Monroe's answer to Sylvester's last publication: and he suspected that there was some reason other than solicitude for the honour of science to account for Monroe's attitude towards the writer. Halloran himself did not share the general opinion of Monroe. He questioned his theories; and it occurred to him that Sylvester's ostensible death removed a menace to Monroe's position as a scientific authority. Was it possible that Monroe did not feel satisfied that Sylvester was dead? Some weeks elapsed before Halloran was able to place the results of his experiments before Sylvester. During the interval he again encountered Monroe; this time in the company of others. The great man was disposed to be learnedly facetious.

"We must amend the classical division of all men into the followers of Plato or of Aristotle," he said. "There are also the Sylvestrians—not to be disregarded, I assure you; eh, Halloran?" But while his huge frame quivered all over with the jest, his anxious eyes were searching the young man's face for some admission. His manner convinced Halloran that Monroe was watching him; and on his next visit to Sylvester he told him what had occurred.

"Yes," said Sylvester complacently. "Monroe knows his master. He picked my brains before, but hadn't wit enough to make use of them, consequently he denied their value; now, he wants to pick them again to better purpose. I'm afraid, Irene," he added, cackling horribly, "that Monroe will feel it his duty to damage your reputation."

The appeal in Irene's eyes braced Halloran to the top of his honour. That he himself might suffer professionally from the association only increased his loyalty; and because he was so sure of himself and of her, he came blindly through loyalty to love. The sense of human wrong in Irene's position made his passion the more bitter; all reason but that of abstract and perhaps fantastic virtue was on the side of his heart. Halloran did not dally with temptation; indeed, he spent himself in fighting against the obvious truth that Irene was legally a free woman. He was maddened

by the fact that in suppressing himself as a lover he condemned her to suffering as a fellow-creature. Every day he learned of some fresh privation or indignity; the hideous selfishness of unhampered intellect was made clear in a dozen ways. Sylvester assumed the necessity for his wife's constant presence in the room except during the few hours he slept, when his sensory switches were turned off, and the current from the battery reduced to a minimum. Though the weather was now bitterly cold, he would not allow a fire in the room, and since an artificial light was, he alleged, a source of contamination to the air, Irene was compelled to sliver long hours in the dark. Sometimes it needed all Halloran's power of self-control to keep silent. He would find the patient woman pale and weary-eyed from hours of reading to her implacable master; for Sylvester had been cut off in the middle of his experiments, and, though he had completed the apparatus for sight, speech, and hearing, had not provided any means for turning over the leaves of a book. He was never tired of lamenting his untimely translation.

"Had I been allowed another year," he would say, "I should have produced an apparatus surpassing the human economy in all its functions.

and to the best of my belief there is only one man in Europe competent to help me. I take this opportunity to withdraw anything I have said, publicly or privately, in disparagement of—ah!—Mr. Sylvester. He is a wonderful man; where is he that I may make the acknowledgment I owe him?"

He paused for breath, fanning himself with his hat. Irene, white with anger, turned involuntarily to the machine. Monroe followed her glance with remarkable acuteness, considering his excited condition. Halloran interposed.

"Dr. Monroe," he began, "I regret that it is quite impossible for you to see—"

"He is alive then!" cried Monroe, with clumsy triumph, getting on his feet.

"I was about to observe that, for the moment, I have the honour to represent Raymond Sylvester," said Halloran coldly. Monroe grinned.

"I congratulate you, I'm sure," he said with a meaning glance from Irene to Halloran, "or should I rather congratulate Raymond Sylvester? It appears that he is unwilling to assist me. I may observe that an



The Thing spoke.

Just a group of sentient ganglia in a network of electric wires, transmuting the familiar current into thought and volition. The details of the motor mechanism were so trivial that I neglected them, concentrating all my powers on the more exacting sensory appliances. I pay the penalty. Bereft of movement, I am at the mercy of a pair of plotting creatures, either of whom could annihilate me by the turn of a hand."

For with the apparent success of Halloran's treatment he threw aside even the semblance of courtesy; and the hour of the young man's visit was consumed between displays of naked egoism and trenchant insinuation. It is remarkable that Sylvester made little use of his unique experience; whatever abnormal impressions he received he made no sign. It would appear, indeed, that such was his invincible malice that he was determined no benefit from his discovery should react upon the humanity he hated even when he properly had ceased to belong to it.

One day when Irene and Halloran were enduring a tedious diatribe from Sylvester they heard a one-sided altercation on the stairs. Old Miriam appeared in the doorway making strangled noises; but before Irene could speak Monroe pushed into the room.

"Mrs. Sylvester," he began in a loud voice, mopping his forehead, "you must pardon my intrusion, but I could not make that old fool understand my message." He sank uninvited into a chair, and lowering his voice to a convincing earnestness, continued. "I am in urgent need of assistance,

important life hangs in the balance, but I should be very sorry to intrude the claims of science, of humanity I might say, upon Mr. Sylvester's admirable domestic arrangements."

He backed with hideous politeness, though his eyes remained glued to the machine, and heavily descended the stairs.

"Halloran," observed Sylvester drily, "if Monroe comes here again I beg you will represent me by kicking him out of the house: I hate a clumsy liar."

Thus was added a new source of anxiety to both Irene and Halloran. Since there was no reason to suppose that Monroe would hold his tongue, Halloran suggested, as a bare act of justice to Irene, that a few persons of discretion should be admitted into the secret of Sylvester's existence. Sylvester would not hear of it.

"I fail to see," he said querulously, "why you two should not take an obvious advantage of the situation and marry. Nothing would be more to my benefit: for, with your inevitable return to sanity, I should again enjoy your undivided attention. At present I am a mere pretext. There is a practical reason that seems to have escaped you. I hesitate to say that I am immortal; but, since the greater part of me can be renewed indefinitely, it is probable that I shall outlive you both by many years. If you marry, there are certain possibilities; don't you think that so important a trust should be kept in the family, as a sort of household

god? You might even found an hereditary Priesthood to minister to the Thinking Machine."

Halloran was heartily weary of the whole business. Had Sylvester shown any moral or mental worthiness his personal suffering would have been more bearable. In the abstract, as a scientific duty, his task deserved the renunciation of every human affection; but that a noble woman should be made to suffer private insult and public suspicion for a mere *Struldbrug* was revolting. He dared not ask even himself what were Irene's feelings towards him: he dreaded even her gratitude. Indirectly, he learned many lessons, and his faith in the sufficiency of material science was mercifully shaken. There is nothing more cruel, nothing more anti-social, than pure reason: it is precisely by those indefinable instincts beyond logic that humanity holds together. So Halloran came to a dim conception of that something, the little more, whether soul or spirit, or, in homely language, "heart," that no analysis can isolate nor synthesis involve; by which alone man holds his proper place in the universe. The phrase "for the blood is the life," appealed to him with irresistible meaning. He learned that the generous colour of life is due to other qualities than those of the brain, and that those impulses, often condemned as a hindrance to reason, are indeed the compensations of humanity. In his life Sylvester had been brutal, but not ungenerous; he was now the embodiment of littleness. He grudged his uncomplaining wife the necessities of existence, overlooking her frugal housekeeping with pitiless regularity. Worry and confinement began to take effect, and Irene was fast being reduced to the lowest condition of health.

Halloran fretted and cursed in impotent fury as he saw her growing daily thinner and paler. Irene would not—and he found a perverse comfort in the fact—dared not allow him any privacy; and, beyond a few hurried words at the door, spoken with averted face, Sylvester had unhindered audience of all they said. The very ease with which they might have escaped their purgatory kept these two in constant sight of honour, and this was the more to their praise, since they received no credit for their steadfastness, but rather the reverse.

"Halloran," Sylvester would observe malignantly, "I don't think much of your enterprise. Why, in my time, with half your encouragement——" and then he would chuckle horribly over a long list of criminal reminiscences, sparing neither names nor details, until the cheeks of his wife were scorched with exquisite shame.

Towards Sylvester, Halloran behaved with quiet self-control, meeting his insults with dignified reserve. Only once did he lose his temper in the

On examination and the discovery of Irene's oversight, Halloran concluded that Sylvester had suffered an epileptic seizure. During the night his brain had become highly electrolysed; there being no outlet for the excess of energy through his organs of communication with the outside world. When consciousness had been restored by interrupted currents of gradually increasing force, Sylvester, vaguely aware of an accident, demanded an explanation. When Halloran told him what had happened, he at once taxed



Halloran's attention was arrested by a paragraph.

Irene with an attempt to destroy him, and suggested Halloran's complicity. Halloran cried out with anger, and moved blindly towards the instrument.

"A pair of ordinary gas-fitter's pliers, my dear Halloran; ordinary pliers," tittered Sylvester; "why this unnecessary waste of energy?"

Under the sway of Irene's eyes Halloran managed to control himself. He, however, assured Sylvester that if his accusations were repeated he would give up the responsibility of attending to him.

The end came with surprising suddenness, and from an unexpected quarter. Glancing idly over the columns of an evening paper, Halloran's attention was arrested by a paragraph headed:

THE BURGLAR AND THE GRAMOPHONE.

A NEW TERROR TO HOUSEBREAKERS.

This morning, between the hours of two and three, a burglary was committed at a house in Hampstead. The police-constable on duty in a road at the rear of the premises observed a man in the act of dropping over the garden-wall. He sounded his whistle, and immediately gave chase; but the burglar, whom he described as a stout, middle-aged man, of gentlemanly appearance, managed to evade pursuit, and, at the time of going to press, has not been apprehended. Among the articles in Mrs. Sylvester's drawing-room was a valuable gramophone. This on investigation was found to have been entirely destroyed by the midnight visitor. It is surmised that, feeling his way about the room, the burglar by some means or other set the instrument in action, and, in a paroxysm of fear, destroyed it.

Halloran went at once to Raleigh Place. Mrs. Sylvester met him with embarrassment that caused him to hope wildly. Yet to the last the man of science asserted himself in anxiety for the fate of Raymond Sylvester.

"Not here," pleaded Irene as Halloran was about to enter the gaunt room where the instrument had lived. She led him into a tiny sitting-room, comfortable, but apparently her own.

"Tell me what has happened," he said. "Can I do nothing—is there no possibility of repair?" She covered her face with her hands.

"Don't speak of it," she murmured; "it was horrible. If it would have been of any use, I would have sent for you at the time."

"Then I will leave you," he said hesitatingly. She burst into tears. When it was possible for them to speak calmly, Irene told him what she knew. Always a light sleeper, she had been awakened by a confused cry from the instrument, followed by the smashing of glass. She ran into the room just in time to hear a scuffling sound as some person dropped from the balcony and ran round the side of the house. Mrs. Sylvester got a light and examined the instrument. The case had been forced open, the glass receiver smashed, and the brain itself irreparably injured.

"I think," she said in conclusion, "that the man intended merely to examine the machine, for I found that the battery cells had been carefully lifted out on the floor. Then, I suppose, he switched on the voice connection, and in his fright struck a violent blow at random."

"Then," said Halloran, "it could not have been an ordinary burglar."

Irene hesitated. "Will you promise to make no attempt to trace the man? The police are not likely to find him unless you or I give them a clue."

"Certainly I will promise what you wish; but I don't understand——"

"I think you will understand, perfectly." Irene opened a drawer in the table and took out something.

"This," she said, "is what the man used to force open the case and smash the glass vessel. I picked it up from the floor just before the policeman came." It was a small steel chisel such as is used in the post-mortem room. Rudely engraved upon it was the name of its owner—"James Monroe."

THE END.



Greeted him with a well-executed movement of suave surprise.

presence of the instrument. To prevent unnecessary wear and tear of the brain substance, he had improved the connection with the battery, so that the current could be regulated with a corresponding increase or diminution of cerebral activity. This, of course, made a slight complication in the duties of the person attending the machine. Instead of only one change between the full action of the brain and sleep, there were now several degrees, indicated by a needle and dial. One evening, tired and dazed with her vigil, Irene switched off the sensory appliances as usual; but, instead of reducing the current to the "by-pass" for the night, left the supply-switch in an intermediate position. On making the external connections in the morning, she was alarmed by a stutering shout from the instrument, and, immediately afterwards, dead silence, with apparent cessation of life. She at once sent for Halloran, who, fortunately, had not yet started for his laboratory

Nursery Rhymes and Tales from Dog Land.

IN FOUR PARTS.



L-BAA-BAA, BLACK SHEEP.

DRAWN BY CECIL ALDIN

NURSERY RHYMES AND TALES FROM DOG LAND.



II.—THE BABES IN THE WOOD.

DRAWN BY CECIL ALDIN

NURSERY RHYMES AND TALES FROM DOG LAND.



III.—DING, DONG, BELL, PUSSY'S IN THE WELL.

DRAWN BY CECIL ALDIN.

NURSERY RHYMES AND TALES FROM DOG LAND.



IV.—JACK, THE GIANT-KILLER.

DRAWN BY CECIL ALDIN.

The Cat

By E. F. Benson

Illustrations by
W. Russell Flint

A

Story of

Weird

Psychology.

MANY people will doubtless remember that season at the Royal Academy, which came to be known when Dick Alingham vaulted, with out of the crowd of strugglers, and admirably certain poise, on the very topmost pinnacle of contemporary fame. He exhibited three portraits, each a masterpiece, which killed every picture within range. But since, that year, nobody cared anything for any pictures, whether in or out of range, except those three, this did not signify so greatly. The phenomenon of his appearance was as sudden as that of the meteor, coming from nowhere and sliding large and luminous across the remotely star-sown sky, as inexplicable as the bursting of a spring on some dust-ridden rocky hillside. Some fairy godmother, one might conjecture, had bethought herself of her forgotten godson, and, with a wave of her wand, bestowed on him this transcendent gift. But, as the Irish say, she held her wand in her left hand, for her gift had another side to it. Or perhaps, again, Hugh Merwick is right, and the theory he propounds in his monograph, "On Obscure Lesions of the Nerve-centres," says the final word on the subject.

Dick Alingham himself, as was indeed natural, was delighted with his fairy godmother or his obscure lesion (whichever was responsible), and (the monograph spoken of above was written after Dick's death) confessed frankly to his friend Merwick, who was still struggling through the crowd of rising young medical practitioners, that it was all quite as inexplicable to himself as it was to anyone else.

"All I know about it," he said, "is that last autumn I went through two months of mental depression so hideous that I thought again and again that I must go off my head. For hours daily I sat here, waiting for something to crack, which as far as I was concerned would end everything. Yes, there was a cause—you know it."

He paused a moment, and poured into his glass a fairly liberal allowance of whiskey, filled it half up from a syphon, and lit a cigarette. The cause, indeed, had no need to be enlarged on, for Merwick quite well remembered how the girl Dick had been engaged to threw him over with an abruptness that was almost superb when a more eligible suitor made his appearance. The latter was certainly very eligible indeed, with his good looks, his title, and his million of money; and Lady Madingley—ex-future Mrs. Alingham—was perfectly content with what she had done. She was one of those blonde, lithe, silken girls, who, happily for the peace of men's minds, are rather rare, and who remind one of some humanised yet celestial and bestial cat.

"I needn't speak of the cause," Dick continued; "but, as I say, for those two months I soberly thought that the only end to it would be madness. Then one evening when I was sitting here alone—I was always sitting alone—something did snap in my head. I know I wondered, without caring at all, whether this was the madness which I had been expecting, or whether (which would be preferable) some more fatal breakage had happened. And even while I wondered, I was aware that I was not depressed or unhappy any longer."

"Well?"

"It was well indeed. I haven't been unhappy since. I have been

riotously happy instead. Some divine doctor, I suppose, just wiped off that stain on my brain that hurt so. Heavens, how it hurt! Have a drink, by the way?"

"No, thanks," said Merwick. "But what has all this got to do with your painting?"

"Why, everything. For I had hardly realised the fact that I was happy again when I was aware that everything looked different. The colours of all I saw were twice as vivid as they had been; shape and outline were intensified too. The whole visible world had been dusty and blurred before, and seen in a half-light. But now the lights were turned up, and there was a new heaven and a new earth. And in the same flash, I knew that I could paint things as I saw them. Which," he concluded, "I have done."

There was something rather sublime about this, and Merwick laughed.

"I wish something would snap in my brain, if it kindles the perceptions in that way," said he. "But it is just possible that the snapping of things in one's brain does not always produce just that effect."

"That is possible. Also, so I gather, things don't snap unless you have gone through some such hideous period as I had been through. And I tell you frankly that I wouldn't go through that again even to ensure a snap that would make me see things like Titian."

"What did the snapping feel like?" asked Merwick.

Dick considered a moment.

"Do you know when a parcel comes, tied up with string, and you can't find a knife," he said, "and therefore burn the string through, holding it taut? Well, it was like that: quite painless, only something got weaker and weaker, and then went. Not very lucid, I'm afraid, but it was just like that."

He turned away, and hunted among the letters and papers which littered his writing-table, till he found an envelope with a coronet on it. He chuckled to himself as he took it up.

"Commend me to Lady Madingley," he said, "for a brazen impudence in comparison with which than putty. She wrote to asking me if I would portrait I had begun of and let her have it at my

"Then I think you lucky escape," remarked suppose you didn't even

"Oh yes, I did: why the price would be two thousand and I was ready to go on has agreed, and sent me for a thousand this

brass is softer me yesterday, finish the her last year, own price." have had a Merwick. "I answer her." not? I said sand pounds, at once. She a cheque evening."



"Commend me to Lady Madingley for a brazen impudence."

Merwick stared at him in blank astonishment. "Are you mad?" he asked. "I hope not, though one can never be sure about little points like that. Even doctors like you don't know exactly what constitutes madness."

Merwick got up.

"But is it possible that you don't see what a terrible risk you run?" he asked. "To see her again, to be with her like that, having to look at her—I saw her this afternoon, by the way, hardly human—may not that so

easily revive again all that you felt before? It is too dangerous: much too dangerous."

Dick shook his head.

"There is not the slightest risk," he said; "everything within me is utterly and absolutely indifferent to her. I don't even hate her: if I hated her, there might be a possibility of my again loving her. As it is, the thought of her does not arouse in me any emotion of any kind. And really such stupendous calmness deserves to be rewarded. I respect colossal things like that."

He finished his whiskey as he spoke, and instantly poured himself out another glass.

"That's the fourth," said his friend.

"Is it? I never count. It shows a sordid attention to uninteresting detail. Funnily enough, too, alcohol does not have the smallest effect on me now."

"Why drink then?"

"Because if I give it up this entrancing vividness of colour and clarity of outline is a little diminished."

"Can't be good for you," said the doctor.

Dick laughed.

"My dear fellow, look at me carefully," he said, "and then if you can conscientiously declare that I show any signs of indulging in stimulants, I'll give them up altogether."

Certainly it would have been hard to find a point in which Dick did not present the appearance of perfect health. He had paused, and stood still a moment, his glass in one hand, the whiskey-bottle in the other, black against the front of his shirt, and not a tremor of unsteadiness was there. His face, of wholesome sun-burnt hue, was neither puffy nor emaciated, but firm of flesh and of a wonderful clearness of skin. Clear, too, was his eye, with eyelids neither baggy nor puckered; he looked indeed a model of condition, hard and fit, as if he was in training for some athletic event. Little and active, too, was his figure; his movements

however small, of any disorder of the nerves. Yet Dick was altogether an abnormal fellow; the history he had just been recounting was abnormal—those weeks of depression followed by the sudden snap in his brain which had apparently removed, as a wet cloth removes a stain, all the memory of his love and of the cruel bitterness that followed. Abnormal, too, was his



"It's so like you, but it just isn't you."

sudden leap into high artistic achievement from a platform of very mediocre performance. Why should there, then, not be a similar abnormality here?

"Yes, I confess you show no sign of taking excessive stimulant," said Merwick. "But if I attended you professionally—oh, I'm not touting—I should make you give up all stimulant and go to bed for a month."

"Why, in the name of goodness?" asked Dick.

"Because, theoretically, it must be the best thing you could do. You had a shock: how bad, your weeks of depression tell you. Well, common-sense says, 'Go slow after a shock: recoup.' Instead of which you go very fast indeed, and produce. I grant it seems to suit you; you also became suddenly capable of feats which—oh, it's sheer nonsense, man!"

"What's sheer nonsense?"

"You are. Professionally, I detest you, because you appear to be an exception to a theory that I am sure must be right. Therefore, I have got to explain you away, and at present I can't."

"What's the theory?" asked Dick.

"Well, the treatment of shock first of all. And secondly, that in order to do good work one ought to eat and drink very little and sleep a lot. How long do you sleep, by the way?"

Dick considered.

"Oh, I go to bed about three usually," he said. "I suppose I sleep for about four hours."

"And live on whiskey, and eat like a Strasbourg goose, and are prepared to run a race to-morrow! Go away, or at least I will! Perhaps you'll break down, though. That would satisfy me. But even if you don't, it still remains quite interesting."

Merwick found it more than quite interesting, in fact; and when he got home that night he searched in his shelves for a certain dusky volume, in which he turned up a chapter called "Shock." The book was a treatise on obscure diseases and abnormal conditions of the nervous system. He had often read in it before, for in his profession he was a special student of the rare and curious. And the following paragraph, which had interested him much before, interested him more than ever this evening—

The nervous system also can act in a way that must always, even to the most advanced student, be totally unexpected. Cases are known, and well-authenticated ones, when a paralytic person has jumped out of bed on the cry of "Fire." Cases, too, are known when a great shock, which produces depression so profound as to amount to lethargy, is followed by abnormal activity, and the calling into use of powers which were previously unknown to exist, or, at any rate, existed in a quite ordinary degree. Such a hyper-sensitized state, especially since the desire for sleep or rest is very often much diminished, demands much stimulant in the way of food and alcohol. It would appear also that the patient suffering from this rare form of the after-consequences of shock has sooner or later some sudden and complete breakdown. It is impossible, however, to conjecture what form this will take. The digestion, however, may become suddenly atrophied, delirium tremens may, without warning, supervene, or he may go completely off his head. . . .

But the weeks passed on, the July sun made London reel in a haze of heat, and yet Alingham remained busy, brilliant, and altogether exceptional. Merwick, unknown to him, was watching him closely, and at present was completely puzzled. He held Dick to his word that if he

The book was a treatise on obscure diseases.

were quick and precise, and even Merwick with his doctor's eye, trained to detect any symptom, however slight, in which the drinker must betray himself, was bound to confess that no such was here present. His appearance contradicted it authoritatively, so also did his manner: he met the eye of the man he was talking to without sideways glances; he showed no signs,

could detect the slightest sign of over-indulgence in stimulant he would cut it off altogether, but he could see absolutely none. Lady Madingley, meantime, had given him several sittings, and in this connection again Merwick was utterly mistaken in the view he had expressed to Dick as to the risks he ran. For, strangely enough, the two had become great friends. Yet Dick was quite right: all emotion with regard to her on his part was dead: it might have been a piece of still-life that he was painting, instead of a woman he had wildly worshipped.

One morning in mid-July she had been sitting to him in his studio, and, contrary to custom, he had been rather silent, biting the ends of his brushes, frowning at his canvas, frowning, too, at her. Suddenly he gave a little impatient exclamation.

"It's so like you," he said, "but it just isn't you. There's a lot of difference! I can't help making you look as if you were listening to a hymn; one of those in four sharps, don't you know, written by an organist, probably after eating muffins. And that's not characteristic of you."

She laughed.

"You must be rather ingenious to put all that in," she said.

"I am."

"Where do I show it all?"

Dick sighed.

"Oh, in your eyes, of course," he said. "You show everything by your eyes, you know. It is entirely characteristic of you. You are a throw-back—don't you remember we settled that ever so long ago?—to the brute creation, which likewise shows everything by their eyes."

"Oh-h! I should have thought that dogs growled at you, and cats scratched."

"Those are practical measures, but short of that you and animals use their eyes only; whereas people use their mouths and foreheads and other things. A pleased dog, an expectant dog, a hungry dog, a jealous dog, a disappointed dog—one gathers all that from their eyes. Their mouths are comparatively immobile, and a cat's is even more so."

"You have often told me that I belong to the genus cat," said Lady Madingley, with complete composure.

"No, thanks. Now when will you want me to give you the final sitting? You said you only wanted one more."

Dick helped himself.

"Well, I go down to the country with this," he said, "to put in the background I told you of. It will take me three days' hard painting, with lack, and a week without. Oh, my mouth waters at the thought of the background! So shall we say to-morrow week?"

Lady Madingley took a note of this in a minute gold and jewelled memorandum-book.

"And I am to be prepared to see cat's eyes painted there instead of my own when I see it next?" she asked, passing by the canvas.

Dick laughed.

"Oh, you will hardly see the difference," he said. "How odd it is that I always have detested cats so! they make me feel actually faint, although you always reminded me of a cat."

"Ah, you must ask your friend Mr. Merwick about these metaphysical mysteries," said she.

The background to the picture was at present only indicated by a few rough splashes close to the side of the head of brilliant purple and brilliant green, and the artist's mouth might well water at the thought of the few days' painting that lay before him. For behind the picture in the long, panel-shaped canvas was to be painted a green trellis, over which, almost hiding the woodwork, there was to sprawl a great purple clematis in full flaunting glory of varnish and starry flower. At the top would be just a strip of pale summer sky, at her feet just a wash of grey-green grass, but all the rest of the background, greatly daring, would be this diaper of green and purple. For the purpose of putting this on, he was

going down to a small cottage of his near Godalming, where he had put up in the garden a sort of outdoor studio, an erection betwixt a room and a mere shelter, with the side to the north entirely open, and flanked by this green trellis, which was now one immense constellation of purple stars. Framed in this, he knew well how the strange pale beauty of his sitter



"No drink of any kind on this Sahara of a morning?"



Turned two shining luminous orbs on him.

"Yes. Perhaps looking at the eyes of a cat would help me to see what I miss. Many thanks for the hint."

He put down his palette and went to a side-table on which stood bottles and ice and syphons.

"No drink of any kind on this Sahara of a morning?" he asked.

would glow on the canvas, how she would start out of the background, she and her huge grey hat, and shining grey dress and yellow hair and ivory white skin and pale eyes, now blue, now grey, now green. This was indeed a thing to look forward to; for there is probably no such unadulterated rapture known to men as creation, and it was small wonder that Dick's mood as he travelled down to Godalming was buoyant and effervescent. For he was going, so to speak, to realise his creation; every purple star of clematis, every green leaf and piece of trellis-work

that he put in, would cause what he had painted to live and shine, just as it is the layers of dusk that fall over the sky at evening which make the stars to sparkle there, jewel-like. His scheme was assured: he had hung his constellation—the figure of Lady Madingley—



He knew he was right.

in the sky; and now he had to surround it with the green and purple night, so that it might shine.

His garden was but a circumscribed plot, but walls of old brick circumscribed it, and he had dealt with the space at his command with a certain originality. At no time had his grass-plot (you could scarcely call it "lawn") been spacious; now the outdoor studio, twenty-five feet by thirty, took up the greater part of it. It had a solid wooden wall on one side and two trellis walls to the south and east, which creepers were beginning to clothe, and which were faced internally by hangings of Syrian and other Oriental work. Here in the summer he passed the greater part of the day, painting or idling, and living an outdoor existence. The floor, which had once been grass, which had withered completely under the roof, was covered with Persian rugs; a writing-table and a dining-table were there, a book-case full of familiar friends, and a half-dozen of basket-chairs. One corner, too, was frankly given up to the affairs of the garden, and a mowing-machine, a hose for watering, shears, and spade stood there. For, like many excitable persons, Dick found that in gardening, that incessant process of plannings and designings to suit the likings of plants and make them gorgeous in colour and huge of growth, there was a wonderful calm haven of refuge for the storm-tossed brain. Plants, too, were so receptive, so responsive to kindness; thought given to them was never thought wasted, and to come back now after a month's absence in London was to be assured of fresh surprise and pleasure in each foot of garden-bed. And here, with that regal generosity was the purple clematis to repay him for the care lavished on it. Every flower would show its practical gratitude by standing model for the background of his picture.

The evening was very warm—warm not with any sultry premonition of thunder, but with the clear, clean heat of summer; and he dined alone in his shelter, with the after-flames of the sunset for his lamp. These slowly faded into a sky of velvet blue, but he lingered long over his coffee, looking northwards across the garden towards the row of trees that screened him from the house beyond. There were acacias, most graceful of all things that grow, summer-plumaged now, yet still fresh of leaf. Below them ran a

little raised terrace of turf, and, nearer, the beds of the beloved garden: clumps of sweet peas made an inimitable fragrance, and the rose-beds were pink with *Baroness Rothschild* and *La France*, and copper-coloured with *Beauté inconstante*, and the *Richardson* rose. Then nearer at hand was the green trellis foaming with purple.

He was sitting there, hardly looking, but unconsciously drinking in this great festival of colour, when his eye was arrested by a dark slinking form that appeared among the roses, and which suddenly turned two shining luminous orbs on him. At this he started up, but his movement caused no perturbation in the cat, which continued, with back arched for stroking and poker-like tail, to advance towards him, purring. As it came closer, Dick felt that shuddering faintness which affected him in the presence of cats come over him, and he hissed and clapped his hands. At this it turned tail quickly: a sort of dark shadow streaked the garden-wall for a moment, and it vanished. But its appearance had spoiled for him the sweet spell of the evening, and he went indoors.

The next morning was pellucid summer: a faint north wind blew, and a sun worthy to illumine the isles of Greece flooded the sky. Dick's dreamless and for him long sleep had banished from his mind that rather disquieting incident of the cat, and he set up his canvas facing the trellis-work and purple clematis with a huge sense of imminent ecstasy. Also the garden, which at present he had only seen in the magic of sunset, was gloriously rewarding and glowed with colour, and though life—this was present to his mind for the first time for months—in the shape of Lady Madingley had not been very propitious, yet a man, he argued to himself, must be a very poor hand at living if, with a passion for plants and a passion for art, he cannot fashion a life that shall be full of content. So, breakfast being finished and his model ready and glowing with beauty, he quickly sketched in the broad lines of flowers and foliage and began to paint.

Purple and green, green and purple: was there ever such a feast for the eye? Gourmand-like, he was utterly absorbed in it. He was right, too: as soon as he put on the first brush full of colour he knew he was right. It was just those divine and violent colours which would cause his figure to step out from the picture; it was just that pale strip of sky above which would focus her again; it was just that strip of grey-green grass below her feet which would prevent her, so it seemed, actually leaving the canvas. And with swift, eager sweeps of the brush, which never paused and never hurried, he lost himself in his work.

He stopped at length with a sense of breathlessness, feeling, too, as if he had been suddenly called back from some immense distance off. He must have been working some three hours, for his man was already laying the table for lunch, yet it seemed to him that the morning had gone by in one flash. The progress he had made was extraordinary, and he looked long at his picture. Then his eye wandered from the brightness of the canvas to the brightness of the garden beds. There, just in front of the bed of sweet-peas, not two yards from him, stood a very large grey cat, watching him.

Now the presence of a cat was a thing that usually produced in Dick a feeling of deadly faintness, yet at this moment, as he looked at the cat and the cat at him, he was conscious of no such feeling, and put down the absence of it, in so far as he consciously thought about it, to the fact that he was in the open air, not in the atmosphere of a closed room. Yet last night out here, the cat had made him feel faint. But he hardly



He threw the glass he carried at the cat.

gave a thought to this, for what filled his mind was that he saw in the rather friendly, interested look of the beast, that expression in the eye which had so baffled him in his portrait of Lady Madingley. So, slowly, and without any sudden movement that might startle the cat, he reached out

his hand for the palette he had just put down, and, in a corner of the canvas not yet painted over, recorded, in half-a-dozen swift intuitive touches, what he wanted. Even in the broad sunlight where the animal stood, its eyes looked as if they were internally smouldering as well as being lit from without: it was just so that Lady Madingley looked. He would have to lay colour very thinly over white.

For five minutes or so he painted with feverishly eager strokes, drawing the colour thinly over the background of white, and then looked long at that sketch of the eye to see if he had got what he wanted. Then he looked back at the cat which had stood so charmingly for him. But there was no cat there. That, however, since he detested them, and this one had served his purpose, was no matter for regret, and he merely wondered a little at the suddenness of its disappearance. But the legacy it had left on the canvas could not vanish thus; it was his own, a possession, an achievement. Truly this was to be a portrait which would altogether outdistance all he had ever done before. A woman, real, alive, wearing her soul in her eyes, should stand there, and summer riot round her.

An extraordinary clearness of vision was his all day, and towards sunset 'an empty whiskey-bottle. But this evening he was conscious, for the first time, of two feelings—one physical, one mental—altogether strange to him: the first an impression that he had drunk as much as was good for him; the second, a sort of echo in his mind of those tortures he had undergone in the autumn, when he had been tossed aside by the girl to whom he had given his soul, like a soiled glove. Neither were at all acutely felt; but both were present to him.

The evening altogether belied the brilliance of the day, and about six o'clock thick clouds had driven up over the sky, and the clear heat of summer had given place to a heat no less intense, but full of the menace of storm. A few big hot drops, too, of rain warned him further, and he pulled his easel into shelter, and gave orders that he would dine indoors. As was usual with him when he was at work, he shunned the distracting influences of any companionship, and he dined alone. Dinner finished, he went into his sitting-room, prepared to enjoy his solitary evening. His servant had brought him in a tray of drink, and till he went to bed he would be undisturbed. Outside the storm was moving nearer; the reverberation of the thunder, though not yet close, kept up a continual growl: any moment it might move up and burst above in riot of fire and sound.

Dick read a book for a while, but his thoughts wandered. The poignancy of his trouble last autumn, which he thought had passed away from him for ever, grew suddenly and strangely more acute; also his head was heavy, perhaps with the storm, but possibly with what he had drunk. So, intending to go to bed and sleep off his disquietude, he closed his book, and went across to the window to close that also. But halfway towards it he stopped. There on the sofa below it sat a large grey cat with yellow gleaming eyes. In its mouth it held a young thrush, still alive.

Then horror woke in him: his feeling of sick-faintness was there, and he loathed and was terrified at this terrible feline glee in the torture of its prey, a glee so great that it preferred the postponement of its meal to a shortening of the other. More than all, the resemblance of the eyes of this cat to those of his portrait suddenly struck him as something hellish. For one moment this all held him bound as if with paralysis; the next, his physical shuddering could be withstood no longer, and he threw the glass he carried at the cat, missing it. For one second the animal paused there, glaring at him with an intense and dreadful hostility; then it made one spring of it out of the open window. Dick shut it with a bang that startled himself, and then searched on the sofa and the floor for the bird which he thought the cat had dropped. Once or twice he thought he heard it feebly fluttering, but this must have been an illusion, for he could not find it.

All this was rather shaky business: so before going to bed he stretched himself, as his unspoken phrase ran, with a final drink. Outside the thunder had ceased, but the rain beat hissing on to the glass. Then another sound mingled with it, the mewling of a cat—not the long-drawn screeches and cries that are usual, but the plaintive calls of the beast that wants to be admitted into its own home. The blind was down, but after a while he could not resist peeping out. There on the window-sill was seated the large grey cat. Though it was raining heavily as he seemed dry, for it was standing stiffly away from its body. But when it saw him it spat at him, staring angrily at the glass, and vanished.

Lady Madingley . . . Heavens, how he loved her! And, infernally as she had treated him, how passionately he wanted her now! Was all his trouble, then, to begin over again? Had that nightmare dawned anew on him? It was the cat's fault: the eye of the cat had done it. Yet

just now all his desire was blurred by this dullness of brain that was as unaccountable as the reawakening of his desire.

For months now he had drunk far more than he had drunk to-day, yet evening had seen him clear-headed, acute, master of himself, and revelling in the liberty that had come to him, and in the cool joy of creative vision. But to-night he stumbled and groped across the room.

The neutral-coloured light of dawn awoke him, and he got up at once, feeling still very drowsy, but in answer to some silent imperative call. The storm had altogether passed away, and a lonely jewel of a morning star hung in a pale heaven. His room looked strangely unfamiliar to him; his own sensations were unfamiliar: there was a vagueness about things, a barrier between him and the world. One desire alone possessed him—to finish the portrait. All else, so he felt, he left to chance, or whatever laws regulate the world, those laws which choose that a certain thrush shall be caught by a certain cat; choose, also, one scapegoat out of a thousand, and let the rest go free.

Two hours later his servant went to call him and found him gone from his room. So, as the morning was so fair, he went out to lay breakfast in the shelter. The portrait was there; it had been dragged back into position by the clematis, but it was covered with strange scratches, as if the claws of some enraged animal, or the nails perhaps of a man, had furiously attacked it. Dick Allingham was there too, lying very still in front of the disfigured canvas. Claws also, or nails, had attacked him; his throat was horribly mangled by them. But his hands were covered with paint; the nails of his fingers, too, were choked with it.



The portrait was there. . . . Dick Allingham was there too.



THE SACK.

DRAWN BY PERCY F. S. SPENCE.



A CONTRAST IN CHRISTMAS FARE; THE LUXURIOUS LIVER AND THE PLAIN MAN.

DRAWN BY R. CATON WOODVILLE.



THE PIXIES' VISIT: A CHRISTMAS-EVE VISION ON THE WAY TO BED.

DRAWN BY ALLAN STEWART.



BLOWING OUT THE CANDLE: WIDE OF THE MARK.

DRAWN BY H. H. FLEKE.

The game is to bring a player blindfold into the room, to turn him round, let him guess where the candle is, approach its supposed position, and blow. The puff takes effect in the unlikely places.



CHRISTMAS EVE IN BERLIN: THE CHRISTMAS-TREE MARKET IN THE STREETS.

DRAWN BY EDWARD CUCUPL.



"WILL HE FIND ME?"—EVADING THE UNDESIRABLE PARTNER.

DESIGNED BY LUCAS DAVY, R.I.

FAGAN

By ROWLAND THOMAS.

This Story won the £1000 Prize in the Competition organised by "Collier's Weekly."

On February 1, 1901, "Collier's" announced that it would give three prizes, one of five thousand, one of two thousand, and one of one thousand dollars, for the best short story submitted under terms which ensured absolute anonymity in a competition to close June 1. Over eleven thousand authors, including many of the best-known writers in America, contributed more than two thousand stories during the four months in which the contest was open. By the predominant opinion of the judges, Hon. Henry Cabot Lodge, Mr. Walter H. Page, and Mr. William Allen White—the first prize was awarded to Mr. Rowland Thomas's story, "Fagan," which is published here.

WHILE Fagan was still a kinky-haired youngster, clad only in the traditional shirt, a question forced itself on his attention. "Why ain't I got a pappy?" he asked his mother, and the great, deep-bosomed woman laughed the deep, melodious laugh of her race. "Lawszee, chile, I raickon you has. Mos' chillen has," she replied. "Who is my pappy?" persisted the child. The woman laughed again. "Lawszee, honey, how you spaik me to 'member that? I'se got other things to maimber, I raickon."

We couldn't expect much of a Fagan, born of that race and class, and he learned not to expect much of us. A bit of food, a bit of clothing, and a chance to roll around on the levee with the other pickaninnies, and bask in the sunshine and sniff the sweet-sour smells from the sugar-ships, sufficed him. For many years these pleasures were his for the taking. And as he grew older they still sufficed, with the addition of a little cheap tobacco and cheaper gin, and he found that a modicum of labour and a care never to offend one of the heaven-born white race would procure them. The labour was easy, for the son of the deep-bosomed, supple-limbed woman had grown, as the rank free growth of a swamp shoots up, into a great, broad, graceful man, to whom the toil of others was as play. And he was of a nature so easy-going and joyous and childish obliging that the heaven-born pointed him out with approval as "a nigger like we had before the war."

He might have lived on thus indefinitely, but one day over a lazy roll of the dice another black man took advantage of his known good nature. And Fagan, the kindly, felt a sudden, blinding desire to strike. The huge black fist shot out like lightning under the impulse of the supple, writhing muscles, and the other man dropped with a broken neck.

Then Fagan came to the Army. And the Army received him with joy. The surgeon's eye glistened with an artist's fervour as he thumped and kneaded the great perfect animal, and the wise old recruiting-sergeant guided the pen for him to sign his name. Thus he was made welcome in that most catholic of societies, which cares not a whit for your past, your present, or your future, so long as you have mind and body sufficient to obey orders.

But even this slight requirement was much for Fagan. His careless, soapless, buttonless existence was a poor training for the rigid minutiae of military life. And he was unfortunate in his immediate commander. Most of the officers of the Fifty-fourth were of the South, able to deal firmly yet kindly with the big black children committed to their charge. But Sharpe was new to the Army, the son of a small tradesman in the North, and had an exalted reverence for the regulations and his own rank. So when he discovered that the buttons of Fagan's blouse were uncleared, one morning at guard-mounting, he did not announce the fact impersonally, as an officer should. And Fagan, in serene ignorance of any law against immediate explanation replied with boyish, surprised chuckle, "Lawszee, Lootenant, I raickon I plumb forgot them buttons."

"That will do," snapped the officer. "Sergeant, put this man under arrest." Fagan followed to the guard-house, mildly expostulant. "He suah'd orter give me a fairah show," he said to his guard. "I was agwine to tell him. I didn't mean no hahm. All I wanted was a fayah show."

Thus began a series of petty persecutions. Fagan, with his good-nature, tried his best, but the Lieutenant would not be pleased. He was not a bad sort in intent, simply a common, weak, official bully. Such men usually resign early, or if they



On the levee.

linger on in the Service, learn to shun getting in advance of their men when there is firing going on. By the time the regiment was ordered to the Philippines, Fagan's record loomed black with five trials.

The campaigning brought relief. A man was required only to have his rifle in order and be on hand in condition to use it. The regiment spent weary days, dragging about like a slow snake under the burning sun, soaking and shivering in the mists of evening, till men began to sicken. But not Fagan. His melodious bellow would ring triumphant along the lines each night, "I'se been wo'okin' on the ra'alroad," and cheer the drooping men till the voices of the regimental wits were demanding, "Who's dat ar white man's got a ra'alroad?" And then one day the scouts reported that the main body of the enemy was near, that elusive body for which the regiment had been groping so long. After a little the snake broke out into a fan, and went crawling across a muddy rice-paddy toward a canebrake. Then a flight of strange drawing insects sang overhead, and, as always when firing is wild and high, some men in the reserve, 'way in the rear, lay down very suddenly. The merry bugles rattled, and the fan dissolved into a thin brown line of men who advanced swiftly to the edge of the brake, firing calmly as they went. And then all at once the brake was alive with dizzily flashing steel. A little brown man rose in front of Fagan, and a flash darted straight at his head. Instinctively his muscles reacted, and he ducked backward like a boxer. The bolo missed his head, but the sharp point, tearing downward, ripped through shirt and flesh on his breast. Fagan stared stupidly at the dripping red edges of the blue cloth till the sharp tingle of the flesh stirred him. As before, he felt a blinding impulse to strike, and whirled his heavy rifle in one hand, as a boy does a stick. He looked down at the quivering, moaning thing before him, and a mad joy of strength surged over him. A little way apart, a struggling group was weaving in and out, with darts of steel and quick flashes of rifles, and hoarse gruntings and cursings. He ran toward it, swinging his broken rifle round his head. "Come on, boys!" he shouted. "Come on—kill the damn niggers!"

From that day he was called Wild Fagan, and Fagan the Nigger-Killer, and, as the campaign progressed, his renown passed beyond the regiment. "Heard about that wild nigger in the Fifty-fourth?" asked the Cavalry, borrowing a pinch of Durham and a bit of paper from the Mountain Battery. "Don't sabbe fire his rifle, just butts in and swats 'em with it, like he was wantin' to play golf." The story grew till the Marines, returning from shore service, told the Fleet, half seriously, of a wild regiment come straight from Africa "what only knew how to fight with war-clubs." And Jacky, ever ready to believe, swore softly in admiration, and spat over the rail, and dreamed of meeting that regiment some night in Nagasaki, when everyone had had about seven drinks all round. Even the officers began to boast. "Oh, you mean our man Fagan," the Colonel would say to the guests at mess. "Yes, he's a good man. Expensive—a rifle lasts him about a day when things are lively—but efficient. Yes, highly efficient. The natives are beginning to dodge the regiment. Yes, I'll let you see him after dinner. Finest build of a man you ever laid eyes on. Like a cat, you know, like a cat and a grizzly rolled into one."

And Fagan through it all was unchanged, good-natured, childlike as ever. He was even a bit ashamed of his strength. "That little scrap down by the bridge?" he would say to a group of admiring men. "Oh, that all wa'n't nothin'." That big Fillypeeno? Yes, I hit him. Yes, I raickon I suah smashed him," he would muse, with his slow smile. "Yes, I broke ma gun on him. Anybody got any tobacco? I nevali could keep no tobacco."

"All I'm lookin' for is just a fayah show."



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It was after the fighting was done and the regiment went into stations of companies in the villages that the change began to come. The men, keyed to exertion and excitement, found the idleness of barrack life at first pleasant, then irksome. And they were at home in these sunny islands, far more at home than ever in the States. They read the freedom of the land in the burning sky, and the clicking palms, and the lazy air. Above all, they read it in the dark, admiring eyes of the brown, slim, soft-moving girls. The men began to be absent at check roll-call at Taps.

At such a time all the wisdom and tact of an officer is needed. Too great easiness means loss of control; harshness means desertion. For a time Lieutenant Sharpe did very well. He overlooked what he could, and was unangered in his firmness when he must be firm. But nature and fixed habit soon overcame him, and Fagan was naturally the chief sufferer, for the officer had grown into the fixed belief that Fagan was the probable cause of every misdemeanour in the company. So it was a reprimand, and then another sharper, and then the summary court—where the Lieutenant was prosecutor and jury and judge—sentenced Fagan to the loss of a month's pay for attempting to "run the guard" at some unearthly hour of the night. Within a week he repeated the offence, and the Lieutenant, with the fear of God and the regulations in his heart, but wondrous small understanding in his head, sentenced him to "a month and a month." A month of confinement will give any man much time for reflection, and the Lieutenant hoped it would prove salutary. Fagan received his sentence with ominous lack of his former protestations, and went quietly to the guard-house. But as he was neither an accomplished thinker nor an expert in moral theory, he merely sat there and brooded. "All I'm lookin' for is just a tayah show," he told himself over and over. "He use me right an' I'll use him right. Ain't I the best fightin' man in the regiment, ain't the Kuhnel done said so, plenty o' times? An' all I want is just a little good time, now there ain't any fightin' When they's fightin' I'll be there. But that little Looenant — Lawszee, how I could smash him!—all I want is jus' a straight deal." Fagan emerged at the end of his month still a child, but a sullen child, moping over a bitter sense of injustice.

"I ain't never gwine to stav in theah anothah night," he told his friend the Sergeant. "All I want is a fair deal, an' I'll use everybody straight, but no one ain't gwine to keep me in theah again." The Sergeant, wise as most old soldiers, answered nothing. If the Lieutenant and Wild Fagan wanted to fight it out, it was no affair of the Sergeant's.

But Fagan, over the drinks, repeated his complaint to other men, who regarded it as a threat and waited joyously for the clash, and were surprised and disappointed when Fagan went quietly to the guard-house once again, placed there to await the sitting of a general court-martial. But the quietness was only because Fagan was learning to plan. When the silence of midnight came, he stole over to an inner window, braced a shoulder and a knee, and the rusted bars yielded silently. He crept upstairs to his squad-room, and took the rifle and the belt, heavy with two hundred rounds of ammunition, from the head of his bunk, and crept as silently down. He tried to steal by the guard at the gate, but the man turned and levelled his rifle, hardly six feet away. "Halt! Who goes there?" he challenged, with the mechanical lilt of the sentry. "You min' you' business, Sam, an' I'll tend to mine," growled Fagan. But the man persisted, though with a tremor in his voice, "You halt, Fagan. Ah've got to find—" Fagan gripped his rifle by the muzzle and stepped swiftly

toward the levelled one. "You git out o' heah, Sam," he said. "Git out, or I'll smash you." The sentry dropped his rifle. "Ah ain't nevah troubled youall," Fagan," he whined. "Ah'm a friend o' youall. You lait me alone. He sank to his knees. "You lait me alone. Don't you touch me, don't you touch—" His voice rose to a shriek, but he was talking to empty air. Fagan had picked up the extra rifle and slipped away toward the town.

"Ah couldn't he'ep it, Sah; he done come up out o' the dahk with his eyes a-buhnin', an' he says, 'Ah'll maash yo', Sam.' Ah couldn't he'ep it. Ah've seen him maash these yere Fillypeenos." Thus the sentry to the Lieutenant next morning, with heartfelt earnestness. "Ah wouldn't cared if he was gwine to shoot, but he comes a-grinnin', an' he says, 'Ah'll maash you, Sam.' That's what he says, an' he'd 'a' done it," he explained later to a group of sympathising men. "Ah don't mind gittin' shot, but Ah suah don't wantir git

maashed. So Ah dropped ma rifle. Ah've seen him maash these Fillypeenos. He ain't a man, he's a plumb born devil," and Sam wiped the sweat-drops from his throat with the back of his big shaking hand.

Then ensued many tentative pushings at the bars, to prove that no two mere men could spring them back into position, and many side-long glances at Fagan's ownerless cot and the chest that stood beside it, closed and mysterious. When the men turned in no one objected that Sam placed a lighted candle on it. "They don't come roun' wheah it's light," he explained vaguely to the room, and everyone knew what "they" meant. Even the Sergeant, coming through at roll-call, apparently did not see the forbidden light.

And now the U. S. A. lapsed into a state of hysteria which often amused and puzzled those who witnessed it. It became haunted by a big black man who mashed people instead of shooting them decently. There happened to be a recrudescence of fighting, and the Army imputed it to Fagan. He, poor, stupid, brooding child, became a tactician, a strategist, a second De Wet of guerilla warfare.

"I have the honour to report," wrote young Shavetail to the A. G. O., "a sharp engagement, wherein the enemy hindered the development of my flanking movement by—unusual brilliancy for native leaders—honour to suggest—deserter Fagan rumoured to be in vicinity."

"Scouts report"—wired Major Oakleaf—"two hours' ride south-east of camp—huge negro—honour to request description renegade Fagan."

"We're out a-gunnin' for a big buck nigger answers to the name of Fagan," said Mountain Battery to

Cavalry, borrowing back the cigarette and a match to boot. "He's seen up backhere in the foothills last night."

"Wire through this mornin'," jeered Signal Corps, "reportin' him up Cagayan way, an' yesterday he was down in Batangas. He must hike light."

"Well, he's sure a lively nigger from all I hear," said Cavalry judiciously. "Some one'll get hurt bad 'fore they get him."

"He'll maybe get hurt a bit himself, just a shade, if this old girl falls on him," laughed Mountain Battery, patting the nose of a vicious little shell in the pack-saddle. "Ho' still, you old mule-horse, you. Don't you try to kick me."

So the little armies marched and sweated, and the wires carried bulletins to every little post: "Inform troops and natives—renegade Fagan, deserter Fifty-fourth—very big black negro, age twenty-one, large bolo scar on breast—five hundred dollars, alive or dead." And all the while Fagan was living quietly with the girl who had been the chief cause of all his insubordination in a little mountain village not fifty miles from the place where his ghost first rose



The snug little house at the end of the sleepy grass-grown street.



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and called for lighted candles. The reports of his evil fame brought him no joy. "Why don't they let us alone?" he complained to Patricia. "I never hurt them, and if they don't trouble us, we won't trouble them. Eh, Patsi?" and he swept the slender girl up to his shoulder. "Pooh," cried Patricia, disdainfully, from her height, "what do we care for them? You will kill them all, won't you?" She pinched the great supporting arm with a sigh of satisfaction. "Hoh, there's Enrique's cock fighting with Juan's. Let's go and watch them." And as they walked down the narrow grassy street the people stepped aside with cheerful smiles, for all the world like the dusty pickaninnies on the levee when one of the heaven-born passes by.

For a long time Fagan and Patricia lived on in the village, till the man was becoming a myth. A dozen enterprising hunters had brought in his head, and the papers in Manila had even ceased to give circumstantial accounts of his capture when news was short. But at last an American prisoner came to the town, the only white man who saw Fagan alive after his desertion. By a strange chance, he was an officer of the regiment, and Fagan received him with sober joy.

"I'se glad to see you, Lootenant," he said. "I raickoned they'd bring you up heah when I hea'd you was done capchuhed. They kind brings mos' ev'rything up to me these days."

Lootenant; you tell him I nevah went to huht no 'Merican, an' nevah will, less'n he goes to huht me first. You believe that, don' you, Lootenant?" And the officer gravely nodded "Yes."

"'Bout that desertin', now. I'se thought a whole lot about that, an' I raickon I did it jus' 'cause I had to have mo' room. I'se some big, I raickon"—he let his eye travel slowly down his body, and chuckled—"seems like I has to have a whole plenty o' room. Seems like there wasn't room for me and Lootenant Sha'ap in one ahmy, no, Sir. An' then, I dunno, Lootenant, maybe you nevah felt how a woman can make you 'shamed o' yousaif? This Patricia heah, maybe she don' seem like much to you, but she's a heap to me—yes, Sir—an' she kept sayin', 'What for you go calabozo, Fagan?' She ain't easy goin' like me, Lootenant, she's got a plenty o' ginger in her. 'What for you go calabozo? Kill the little pig of a tenient,' she says. 'Kill everybody. You're big enough.' An' then she laughs at me—'Is you afraid, big' man?' she says. 'Lend me you' revolvah, big man. I'se little, but I'se not afraid.' She jus' make me plumb scaired o' mysaif, an' we come away 'cause Patsi an' me needed mo' room 'an what Lootenant Sha'ap could give us. 'Pears like you couldn't understan'. I'se no good at splainin' things, but I raickon that's the way it was. I jus' had to desert or huht somebody bad."



They laughed and played and lay for hours beside some cool spring.

The white man was not so joyous, but undismayed. "What are you going to do with me now you've got me?" he asked.

"Oh, don' you worry, Lootenant. I wouldn't huht you. No, Sir, you nevah troubled me. You jus' sit down, Lootenant, an' have a smoke. I'se agwine to send you down, jus' as soon as I can."

They sat and smoked in silence, the giant negro, the prisoner in his dragged uniform, the little brown guards with their naked bolos. At last Fagan said, "I raickon we could talk bettah if these guards was away. You git out—" he pointed to them. "'Course you give you' wohd, Lootenant, you won't try to 'scape." "I promise," said the officer, and fell to watching the great, quiet, unshapen, black face. It roused his curiosity for a certain non-offensive air of self-reliance which he had never seen in a black face before. "Fagan," he asked at length, "why did you do it?" "Do what, Lootenant?" "Why, desert, and lead the natives against us, and all that." The negro clinched his great fist. "This yere fool talk makes me plumb riled," he said, thumping the rude table. "I ain't nevah fought the 'Mericans. Why, I'se a 'Merican mysef. What'd I want to go yampin' round the country for, anyway. I'se got all I want right heah, chickens an' yams, an' a good dry house an'—" He reached out his hand and grasped Patricia's little one, and they smiled at each other. "No, Sir, I don't want no mo' fightin'. I'se got a good home an' I goes to sleep when I wants to, an' I gets up when I wants to, an' I has good clean clothes ev'ry day. You tell the Kuhnel,

He stopped, and the woman began to speak to him. The white man watched her, and a great light burst upon him. She was glorious, this slim brown thing with the dusky hair and the straight, slender neck, and—"I'm little, but I'm not afraid," mused the Lieutenant. Ages of civilisation dropped from him as he gazed, and with a somewhat graceless pity he compared the pale fettered woman he had known with this free, wild, perfect thing whose feeling was her life. She was talking with her tongue and eyes and hands, and Fagan answered a few words and laughed, and she laughed, too, a sound as natural and sweet as the ripple of a stream, and then her great eyes lighted with earnestness as she went on. The Lieutenant felt a pang of something almost shame. He could never bring fire to those eyes; he was not a man to her, only a thing, not to be compared with this black giant.

Fagan turned to him with an amused chuckle. "She's full o' ginger," he said. "I raickon it's lucky I was heah when you come. She was askin' me when I was goin' to kill you. 'You must,' she says, 'or else he'll lead soldiers up heah'—that's all right, Lootenant," he said, as the officer moved uneasily. "That's you' duty, an' it's all right, only she don't understan' that. 'Let's kill him now,' she says. 'You talk with him, an' I'll put a knife into him from behind. It won't be no trouble at all.' Lawssee," he chuckled, admiringly. "I raickon she'd 'a' done it, too. She's got mo' ginger." The Lieutenant smiled with him, but he soon rose unobtrusively and seated himself with his back to the solid corner-post of the house. Patricia watched the manoeuvre with

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"I remain, yours sincerely, ELIZA C. DAW."

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"I don't know," said the Lieutenant, "I'm right sorry about this. But—why don't you come down with me now and surrender?" he asked impulsively. "That will help, and I can explain things to the court and you'll only get six months or so for desertion. Or, if you like, you can come with me to the guard-house again. Good-bye, and good luck to you. I don't think we'll ever meet up again."

Fagan, said the Lieutenant, yet more earnestly, while his guard was waiting for him to mount, "I'm right sorry about this. But—why don't you come down with me now and surrender?" he asked impulsively. "That will help, and I can explain things to the court and you'll only get six months or so for desertion. Or, if you like, you can come with me to the guard-house again. Good-bye, and good luck to you. I don't think we'll ever meet up again."

I do. Down theah I'se a regular soldier, up heah I'se a regular soldier. I any right to try me," he burst out. "I nevah troubled them. You tell the Kuhnle that: I want he should understand. I don't want to hult no one, but I'se nevah in the guard-house again. Good-bye, I an' good luck to you. I don't think we'll ever meet up again."

So Fagan and Patricia must needs leave the snug little brown house at the end of the sleepy, grass-grown street, and go out on the High Trail, the unknown to the people of the plains, a broad highway to men with hoofs and claws and wings, and to men little less wild than these, the men of the hills. At times the little brown thread was twined amid the giant roots of trees, and they wandered in a cool twilight,



He turned a bend in the Trail, and there—

alone with the long creepers and the ferns and the bright birds that played about some opening in the matted roof, far above their heads, where the sun stole through for a brief hour. Sometimes it clung to the massive walls of a canyon, where a river boiled so far below that the sound of its torment came to their ears like the babble of a brook. Sometimes it shot upward to the realm of the clouds, and from a bare, grassy height they peered out through shifting mistwreaths over all the cities and fields of the plains to the blue hint of the distant sea.

Fagan and Patricia followed the Trail steadily but leisurely, day after day. There was no call for haste, no white pursuer knew that road. So they laughed and played, and lay for hours beside some cool spring, basking in the warm sunshine and the thin, sharp air, and camped at night in little valleys under a pall of cloud. Once Fagan shot a deer, and they delayed for days, drying the meat over pungent wood-smoke. But as their muscles hardened to the Trail, they insensibly made greater progress, in spite of their dallying. Two weeks brought them to the land of the Unknown, had they but known it. The mountains were higher and wilder, the cloudcaps more frequent. Often the forest on some huge hill, towering black above the Trail, was thin and pointed at the top, as if it had been torn, and there, unseen of them, was a village perched high on the trunks of trees, whence keen-eyed men watched their progress, but they were children of the plains and could not know, so they walked undismayed. And the keen-eyed men walked with them, unseen, frisking along above them over ground where others would have crept—short, huge-limbed men, whose stiff black hair flowed over their shoulders and was tied out of their eyes with a fillet, men who squatted naked in the mists of evening and did not shiver, men who brought their sweethearts hideous dowries of human heads. They hung about the Trail, watching these strange creatures who walked openly and undismayed in the

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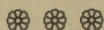
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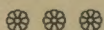
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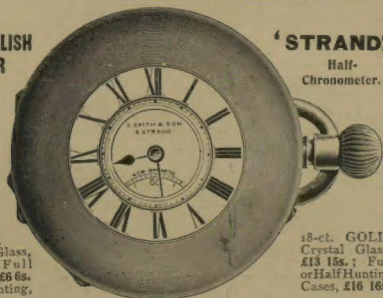
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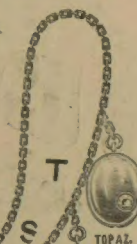
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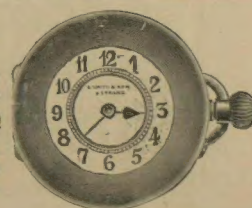
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land of Fear. Often, when the campfire was lighted, they stole noiselessly up, their muscles twitching like a cat's before she springs, and then halted as a great voice rang over the forest, "I've been wo'kin' on the ra'alroad," and they clawed their way up the slopes to the long-legged villages and held council together in the queer fire-shadows.

One evening, as they camped, Patricia missed a little bundle of venison, and strolled back along the Trail to look for it. Fagan kindled the fire, and then strolled back too. "Hoy, Patsi!" he called. The forest was silent. He turned a bend in the Trail, and there—Fagan gazed at it stupidly, and then the blind impulse of wrath swept over him again. But there was naught to strike. The long shadows of the trees lay across the Trail, the creepers swayed lazily in the evening breeze; far up a crow called petulantly for her belated mate. Fagan swung his arm helplessly at the forest. "Come out," he moaned; "come out wheah I can see you! Come out, you cowards, you sneakin' dogs that kill women from behind! I've not afraid of you. Oh, I'll mash you! Come—" With a soft *ching* a lance stuck quivering in a tree beside him. Otherwise the forest was silent; even the crow had ceased to scold. He looked down. A darker shadow was stealing among the lengthening ones on the Trail. A spirit of the forest gripped Fagan like an icy hand, the spirit of Dread, and he ran blindly to the fire, seized his rifle, and took up the Trail alone.

For three days and nights he hurried on. The empty pain of his stomach, the dizzying, numbing lack of sleep, could not hold him against the dread of that unseen escort. It gave little sign, simply the rustling of a fern now and then, the swaying of one creeper when others were still; but he felt its presence and staggered on. On the evening of the third day he stepped suddenly from the forest into a little theatre among the hills. A clear brook bubbled over golden gravel, the turf beneath a great solitary tree was thick and soft. The tops



Then he lay back lazily and twisted his last bit of tobacco into a cigarette.

of the encircling hills were ruddy with the sunset; but the dusk was growing in the hollow. The wild cocks in the wood were crowing their families to roost. Everything was quiet and peaceful, and Fagan as he gazed became quiet and peaceful too.

He flung himself on the soft turf, and drank his fill from the little brook. As always when he sought to rest, the forest became vague with life. A covey of wild chickens whirled above the opening, flushed by a sudden fright. A stone rolled some where close at hand, dislodged by a purposely careless foot, and Fagan grinned and shook off the clinging cartridge-belt. "You can't bluff me," he said to the forest, a trick he had learned of late. A fern swayed uneasily not a dozen yards away, and he clicked a cartridge into his rifle and fired. "You git out," he chuckled. "I've a-gittin' tired of you' company."

When he was rested a little he kindled a fire and toasted a bit of venison. Then he lay back lazily and twisted his last bit of tobacco into a cigarette. Between puffs he bellowed his evening song, and the rude melody took on the sweetness of a ballad. "Don' you heah the bugle callin'?" sang Fagan, and tossed the butt of the cigarette into the fire. It was quite dark now in the hollow, and he sat in a little circle of dancing light. He looked at the wall of darkness with quiet, unfrightened eyes that presently began to close with the pressure of a mighty drowsiness.

"I've kind o' sleepy now," he announced at length, "an' I've agwine to bed. I was hopin' to sit up an' meet youall, but I can't do it. Youall can wake me up when you wants me." The fire flickered, and he pillowed his head on his arm, and watched the dance of the shadows grow shorter. "Lawsee," he murmured, drowsily, as the great numbness of sleep stole over him, "I raickon Patricia'd think I was afraid again. That little girl did have the po'owfullest lot o' ginger in her." He threw his great arm over the empty ground beside him. "Good-night, Patsi," he murmured. THE END.

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